



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 71.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S SWEEPSTAKE

OR
HUNTING THE PARADISE GOLD MINE



"FIRE! I COMMAND YOU! BRING THE HORSE DOWN!" WAS THE STERN RESPONSE, AND BUFFALO BILL LEVELED HIS REVOLVER AND PULLED THE TRIGGER.



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BUFFALO BILL'S SWEEPSTAKE;

OR,

Hunting the Paradise Gold Mine.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

BUFFALO BILL APPEARS.

A column of soldiers was filing slowly out of a stockade fort in Arizona, and the band was playing the "Dead March."

To a casual observer, it would have been thought a funeral, that the soldiers were marching to the grave with some dead comrade.

But no; there was no dead man being borne to the grave, but a live one.

A soldier rode upon a wagon, seated upon his coffin, for the corpse was yet to be made that was to be buried.

The man seated upon his coffin was of fine physique, dressed in uniform, and had a face that was clean-shaven, and so revealed every feature.

It was a strong face, though deadly pale now, a face that was fearless, passionate, determined in expression.

He looked neither to the right or the left as he was borne along, but kept his eyes fixed ahead upon a spot in the little valley, upon the bank of a pretty stream, where a group of men were standing, awaiting the coming cortège.

Where those men stood was seen fresh earth turned up, and an open grave.

Save the strains of the funeral march played by the

band, no sound broke the stillness, and all faces looked solemn and stern.

Down the hill wound the column, the infantry formed in three sides of a square, the open side toward the brook and the sun, now near its setting, and the execution squad marched to the grave, and halted.

Just then a horseman came up at a gallop, on his way to the fort. He saw the scene on the banks of the stream, recognized there the commandant of the fort, and wheeling, rode toward him.

The horse was a splendid one, the rider a magnificent specimen of manhood, tall, of fine build, upright in bearing, and with a face which, once seen, could not be readily forgotten.

His hair swung in many waves below his broad shoulders, a mustache shaded his stern, expressive mouth, and, dressed in buckskin, with a wide-brimmed sombrero and top-boots, he was a most picturesque-looking personage.

He sat his steed like one reared in the saddle, and about his waist was a belt of arms, while a rifle hung at his saddle-horn.

All eyes were upon him, as he rode up, for all recognized the noted scout, Buffalo Bill, who had voluntarily gone on a long trail, through a dangerous Indian coun-

try, to the headquarters of the district commander, to see if a reprieve would be given the condemned man.

The condemned soldier, who now stood at the head of his open grave, his coffin at his feet, had flushed at sight of the horseman, and then once more turned deadly pale, though otherwise he showed no fear and was perfectly calm.

The scout threw himself from his horse, when ten feet away from the commanding officer, who was near the prisoner, and, saluting, handed to him a paper.

Not a word was uttered, and a deathlike silence was upon all.

The eyes of each man moved in their sockets, turning from the prisoner to the commandant, as he read the official paper handed to him by Buffalo Bill.

The prisoner's face did not change; not a muscle quivered; only his breast rose and fell more rapidly.

Turning to the prisoner, when he had read the document, Major Randall said:

"Wallace Weston, Buffalo Bill risked his life to go to Fort Wingate and present a plea for a reprieve for you. For your sake, I am sorry to say to you that the plea was in vain; for the colonel says that your offense, in taking the life of a brother soldier, was a most heinous one, and, having been tried by court-martial and sentenced to death, he can do nothing—that you must die, and may Heaven have mercy upon your guilty soul."

The voice of Major Randall quivered as he spoke the words, but in firm tones the doomed man replied:

"I expected such a response; but am I to die bound like a wild beast?"

"No; free his arms and feet of the bonds upon them," ordered the major.

Two soldiers stepped forward, and in a moment the man was free.

He turned and gazed about him an instant, his eyes suddenly falling upon the magnificent horse ridden to the spot by Buffalo Bill; then, with a mighty bound, he had cleared the space between, had thrown himself into the saddle, and with a wild, defiant yell, was away.

"Shoot him down!" shouted Major Randall, in tones of peremptory command.

But vain the attempt!

Not a musket was loaded, and the execution squad had not yet charged their guns.

"You are a dead revolver shot, Cody; bring him down, for he is yet within range," cried the officer.

The fugitive had dashed straight for the stream, and had forced the gallant horse to make the leap.

Down he had gone into ten feet of water, but, rising quickly, was swimming for the other shore, and the stream was hardly fifty feet wide.

At the command, Buffalo Bill drew his revolver, leveled it, and then said:

"Remember, Major Randall, that man once saved my life."

"Fire! I command you! Bring the horse down!" was the stern response, and Buffalo Bill leveled his revolver and pulled the trigger.

Every eye watched Buffalo Bill as he pulled the trigger.

All knew that he was a dead shot—a man who never missed a foe or game he fired upon.

The hand was steady, the fugitive not yet a hundred yards away, and that same revolver had brought down,

fired by that iron hand, aimed by that unerring eye, a deer at a hundred yards.

The sharp report came, the flash, and the bullet sped on its way.

A murmur ran through the crowd of soldiers, as they saw the bullet strike the water two feet to the right of the horse!

An impatient imprecation came from the major's lips, and Buffalo Bill fired again, just as the horse reached the other shore.

Again a murmur, for the bullet knocked up the earth to the left of the feet of the animal.

Once he had reached the land, with a yell of defiance, the fugitive was away, glancing over his shoulder, while rapidly shot after shot rung out from the revolver.

But not a bullet touched horse or rider, or, if it did, there was no evidence of its doing so.

Calmly the scout returned his revolver to his belt, and walked away, while Major Randall quickly ordered the cavalry, who were on foot, to double-quick to the fort and pursue the fugitive.

Intense excitement for a few minutes followed the daring escape of the condemned soldier, but military discipline promptly brought order out of chaos; the band began to play, and the troops marched back to the fort.

As the head of the column reached the stockade gates, out of them rode a squad of cavalry, headed by an officer, and they started off in hot pursuit of the fugitive from death at the hands of his comrades for a crime committed.

"And Buffalo Bill missed him, though he fired six shots," were the words going from lip to lip, and men shook their heads ominously, while now and then was one bold enough to say that:

"He did not aim to hit him—Buffalo Bill never misses his game, be it man or beast; he did not wish to kill him, or bring down his horse, and have him recaptured."

This was the opinion that rapidly gained ground; but, whether true or not, Buffalo Bill had nothing to say. He quietly went to his quarters, making no remark at the loss of his horse, saddle, and outfit, not to speak of his rifle, which hung upon the horn of his saddle.

Fort Faraway was a very dangerous post, for it was in the midst of the Indian country, a military check upon the movements of the hostiles, and a barrier to keep them back from the settlements that were beginning to extend further and further out upon the Utah and Arizona frontier.

Several hundred soldiers were stationed there, consisting of a couple of sections of light artillery, two troops of cavalry, and three companies of infantry, with a score of scouts, under Buffalo Bill, who was their chief, and in time of need further increased his command by some thirty cowboys, who were stationed at the post, guarding a herd of cattle that were kept there.

Half a troop of cavalry, under Lieutenant Tompkins, had started out after the fugitive soldier, now a deserter, as well as a man under death sentence, and yet the hope of catching him was very slight.

There was one chance, and that was, as he had gone toward the desert lands, they might be able to cut him off, drive him into them, and, without guide, food or water, rather than risk the tortures of starvation, he would yield himself a prisoner again, and submit to death by execution.

Away went the cavalry at a run, crossing the stream where the fugitive had, and pushing rapidly on toward a hill which they hoped to reach while there was yet light enough to obtain a view of the vast expanse beyond, then the soldier could be seen if within six or eight miles.

They pushed their horses hard, and reached the hilltop just as the sun was touching the mountain horizon on the distant mountain range.

With his fieldglass to his eyes, Lieutenant Tompkins swept the expanse before him, and almost instantly called out:

"There he goes! He is heading directly along Death Trail, and for the desert.

"We must deploy into a long line, and thus pursue to the desert."

The order was given, the troopers deployed into a line a mile in length, and thus advanced at a gallop in chase.

A deep canyon split the plain on the right of the line, and a red cliff on the left, which no horseman could ascend, and then stretched away into the desert, so that the fugitive would be driven away from all hope of food, water and grass for his horse, and be forced to risk the deadly danger before him, or return and give himself up.

Lieutenant Tompkins was not a man to give up a chase until all hope of success failed, and, though he had come without rations for his men, he pushed on at the risk of bringing suffering upon himself and his soldiers.

With the moon almost at its full, and the troopers scattered across the level plain of sand, from range to canyon, there was no chance of the fugitive slipping past them and going back into the mountain country, where game, grass and water were in abundance.

Out upon the desert they rode, guided by the light of the moon, and not until after midnight did Lieutenant Tompkins call a halt for rest, for then there was no grass for the horses, no water, and the men must go supperless to their blankets.

The morning dawned to show that the fugitive, like themselves, had slept upon the desert.

He was visible a few miles away, just mounting the horse of Buffalo Bill, which had saved his life thus far, to continue his flight.

He saw the troopers as they did him, and started further into the desert at a canter.

"Come, men, Buffalo Bill had ridden a long way, so his horse must have been very tired, and must now be broken down.

"Our animals are fresh, and we can catch Weston by pushing him hard," called out Lieutenant Tompkins.

He threw himself into his saddle, as he spoke, and, the men following his example, they were off at a swinging gallop.

Miles away was visible a clump of trees, and the guide told the lieutenant that there was a spring there, good grass and firewood in plenty, but beyond there was not another drop of water, blade of grass or tree for many, many long miles, the desert stretching away from that point into a woodless, treeless, waterless waste of sand.

That the horse ridden by the fugitive, splendid animal though he was, could not last much longer, the officer and his men soon discovered, for their animals, not being jaded, as was the scout's horse, by a four days' hard ride, were used up.

So they pushed on the more rapidly, convinced that in the oasis, or motte, they would bring the prisoner to bay.

They drew rapidly nearer to the motte, in which they had seen the horseman disappear, and, though the sun was blistering hot, the dust of fine sand torturing, and the heat causing their horses to pant like hounds, they did not draw rein until they dashed into the little bit of timber, men and animals glad to find water and shade at hand.

The gallant young lieutenant, convinced that the fugitive would stand at bay, preferring to die fighting rather than be shot down at execution, halted his men, and rode on alone, determined to try parleying with Wallace Weston before firing upon him.

As he came near the center of the timber, he started, as a shout greeted him, and, to his surprise, saw the soldier mounted upon a fresh horse, and flying away like the wind, while, standing near, with head hanging low, was the horse of Buffalo Bill, stripped of his bridle, saddle and outfit.

A loud call brought his men to the spot, and, as they saw that the fugitive had a fresh mount, and a good one, the guide called out:

"He has picked up a stray horse that has wandered here, lieutenant, and that ends the chase."

"Can we not follow him, Casey?"

"No, sir; for, you see, our critters are dead beat, and his mount is as fresh as a bird; but he is going to certain death out yonder on that terrible desert."

"Will he not flank us, and get back to the hills?"

"No, sir, for the canyons from there run in such a way that he can only come right back this way, or go straight on across the desert."

"Then he will do that."

"No, sir, for he'll never be able to strike the other side, as he will be overcome with the heat, see mirages, and ride round and round in the desert until he dies, or his horse does, and that means that he will quickly follow."

"Well, we will halt here until to-morrow, for the horses will be all right, though we ourselves must starve it out.

"If he comes back, it will be in that time, and if he does not, he will go to his death, as you say, for no man or beast can long survive out on that arid plain."

Making a show of still pursuing, Lieutenant Tompkins, the guard, Casey, and a few of the troopers whose horses were in the best condition, kept up the chase, while the others were told to stake out their animals, and hunt about for some kind of game to stay their hunger.

After going half a dozen miles, however, Lieutenant Tompkins, in mercy to man and beast, gave the order to retreat, leaving the fugitive, whose horse was still fresh and far ahead, to continue his flight without further pursuit.

Returning to the motte, the troopers found that their comrade had hunted in vain for any kind of game; but water was in plenty, and that refreshed them, while their horses had good grass to feed on, which caused a sergeant to lament, and the others to acquiesce with him, hungry as all were, that they were not, for the time being, grass-eaters themselves.

That night they started upon their return to the fort, having done their best, but failed.

CHAPTER II.

NOT GIVEN UP.

When the commandant of Fort Faraway found that the troopers, under Lieutenant Tompkins, did not return late at night, and knowing that they had gone off, in their hurried pursuit, without rations, he ordered a force to be ready to go out the next morning and carry supplies to them.

He also sent for Buffalo Bill, and when the chief of scouts appeared, said:

"Cody, there is no one who regards you more highly than I do, no one who would be further from doubting your loyalty, and yet I feel very sure that in this case you did not seek to bring down the horse upon which Sergeant Wallace Weston was making his escape."

"Major Randall, you may recall that I found Wallace Weston dying on the plains; that I took him to the nearest fort, and was the cause of his enlisting as a soldier when he recovered. He had been a soldier before, though he would have nothing to say of his past.

"I liked the man, and, though stern, and holding apart from all, he was yet very popular, and rose to a corporal's position, then to that of sergeant. That there was something between Sergeant Manton Mayhew and Weston more than the quarrel that ended in the former's death, I am certain; but Weston would say nothing as to that, and accepted his condemnation in silence, and without a murmur.

"You are aware, I believe, Major Randall, that Sergeant Weston, when we had the Indian battle in New Mexico, and in which my horse was killed, rode back alone, at the risk of his life, leading an animal for me to mount, and, but for his aid then, I could never have escaped alive.

"It was for this that I rode to the general's quarters to try and get a delay in his execution, hoping that he might be able to bring some evidence that would change the sentence of death against him.

"I came just in time with the refusal of the general to interfere, and the man, a bold fellow, as you know, leaped upon my tired horse and made his escape.

"You ordered me to fire, and I obeyed, but I was firing upon the horse that had been my comrade in many a danger, on many a long trail, and I was to bring down the man who had saved my life—the man I was instrumental in getting to enlist in the army."

Major Randall listened with deepest attention to the scout, and then said, while he was impressed with what he had heard:

"I do not wonder, Cody, that you did not care to kill that man, and yet I know had you wished to have done so, you could have brought both horse and rider down, for you are too deadly a shot to have missed, even with a revolver.

"You have lost your horse and outfit, and I can only report that firing upon the fugitive failed to bring him down."

"Thank you, sir."

"But I wish you to take the trail after him, run him to earth, if possible, and, if you capture him, as the day appointed for his execution has passed, I will take the responsibility of delaying further until a full report can be made to headquarters, and in that time, if Weston can be

made to talk, to speak for himself, he may be able to clear away the evidence so as to get clemency shown him."

"I hope so, sir."

"Now, go with Lieutenant Peyton and twenty men, after that gallant, young Tompkins, who will push on, if he starves his men and kills his horses, to capture Weston, whom, however, he has always liked.

"Lieutenant Peyton and his men can push on, while Lieutenant Tompkins returns to the fort, and you are to be the guide and scout, and I feel that you will do your duty."

"I will endeavor to do so, sir."

"You have other horses and outfits, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, and will be ready for the trail when you give the order to start, sir," and, saluting, Buffalo Bill left the major's quarters.

Half an hour after, Buffalo Bill, as scout, rode out in advance of the squad, with supplies, going to the relief of Lieutenant Tompkins.

The party pushed ahead at a brisk pace, carrying several pack-horses with them, and it was just daybreak, when passing over the ridge, for Buffalo Bill had followed the trail in the moonlight, that they came in sight of the returning squad.

They at once went into camp, and when their half-famished and tired comrades rode up, coming from the desert, they had a good breakfast awaiting them.

The two squads greeted each other with cheers, and the haggard faces of those who had been over forty hours without food told how they had suffered.

But, though he let his men return, Lieutenant Tompkins, who was the senior officer of the troop that both squads came from, told Lieutenant Peyton that he would go on with the fresh men, while he, who had lately had a sick attack, should return to the fort.

After a rest of two hours, and a good breakfast, the handsome young officer placed himself at the head of the fresh troopers, and, with a farewell to their comrades, they rode on toward the desert, Buffalo Bill riding in advance.

"We will push on to the motte to-night, Cody, and camp there, and to-morrow follow the trail of the fugitive from there, for I will not give up the pursuit until I capture him, or know that he had gone to his death in the desert," said Lieutenant Tompkins.

The squad descended the range, from the shelter of the trees, going down upon the burning, treeless plain, and held on between the cliffs upon the one side and the canyon on the other, to the desert.

Riding up to the side of Buffalo Bill, Lieutenant Tompkins said:

"Have you ever been far out into this Arizona desert, Cody?"

"Yes, lieutenant, I penetrated it once to solve a mystery of a fertile valley said to be in the center.

"That was some time before you came to the fort."

"Oh, yes, I have heard of that, and that you found a band of gold-diggers there who kept everybody away?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is a very dangerous trail, to push into this desert, I can well understand from my short experience with it."

"It is death to the man not acquainted with the geography of its surroundings, and, carrying no food and water, to penetrate it beyond the reach of his vision, where

he can keep the mountains in sight, for after we leave the motte ahead it is sand, rock and barren waste, with no water, for the holes that have water at times are now dried up."

"Yet the sergeant went straight out into its desolation."

"Yes, lieutenant, for he felt that sure death was before him, and a chance of life ahead."

"You have no belief in finding him, I am sure?"

"Yes, I have, sir."

"His body?"

"That is it, sir, for, though he got a fresh horse, as you told me, in the motte, I had but little food in my haversack, and there is no chance of his standing this terrible heat and suffering long."

"You expect, then, that he will either drop on the trail or return?"

"He'll not return, lieutenant, for he is not that kind of a man, but push on to death, rather."

"Was it not strange about his finding that horse, Cody, in the motte, at the very moment your horse could go no further?"

"Some men are born for good luck, Lieutenant Tompkins, and the escape and finding of that horse leads me to think he is one."

"I agree with you, but do you think you can follow his trail over the desert?"

"Oh, yes, unless we have a windstorm to drift the sand, and that is not likely."

"Well, I like the fellow, and I believe that he had more reason for killing Sergeant Mayhew than he would admit to the court-martial."

"Weston is a strange man, Cody, and I have an idea that he has seen far better days, and is a man of education."

"I have thought the same, sir; but there looms the motte, and, if he has been driven back, we will find him there."

"For my part, I hope not, though I shall leave nothing undone to capture him," said the kind-hearted lieutenant.

The motte now loomed up ahead, and the two horses pushed on without urging, their instinct telling them that there was rest, water and grass ahead of them.

The heat was intense; there was a glare of fire, it seemed, rising from the desert, and both men and animals were suffering.

When at last the shade of the motte was reached, there was an instant relief, but even there the burning sun caused the heat to be almost unbearable.

The horses were soon feeding at will, and the men, throwing themselves down in the shade near the spring, awaited for night to come on before making an effort to cook their supper.

After dark they had a light meal, and sought rest, for they were to make a start early enough in the morning to bring them to the spot where they had given up the trail before, for from there on Buffalo Bill would have to follow the trail of a single horse.

With cooked food, canteens filled and orders not to touch a drop without permission, the pursuing soldiers made an early start, and reached the spot where the single trail of the fugitive held on just as the sun rose and cast its burning rays over the desert.

Ahead and alone, Buffalo Bill followed the dim trail at

a pace that he knew the horses could stand, yet swifter than that at which he thought the fugitive had gone.

The trail led directly in a straight line for miles, then swerved a little to the right, and not long after began to go on a zig-zag course.

The scout halted, and, when Lieutenant Tompkins rode up, he was examining the ground attentively.

"Have you lost the trail, Cody?"

"No, sir; I have found another."

"What do you make out of that?"

"Simply that both trails were made by the same horse."

"Then he has doubled upon his track?"

The scout made no reply, and a peculiar look passed over his face, while he said:

"It may be, sir, and yet I doubt it."

"Well, you have good eyes, for I only now and then can see a track."

"Yes, sir, and that track tells the story," and Buffalo Bill led the way once more.

An hour after, a large rock towered up, standing alone out in the desert, and toward this landmark the trail ran.

As they neared it, all saw an object lying at the base of the rock, and, approaching closer, Buffalo Bill said:

"We have found him, Lieutenant Tompkins, for there lies both man and horse."

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER III.

A GRAVE IN THE DESERT.

The men all approached the solitary rock in the desert, which stood out like a monument to the dead, with an air of reverence.

They had admired the sergeant, whom they knew to be brave to recklessness, of a generous nature, though stern and fond of being alone.

The man he had killed they did not like.

He was wont to speak of his having been born a gentleman and rich, and that fraud had deprived him of his fortune.

He was overbearing, and at times possessed a very ugly temper.

What had passed between Weston and his brother sergeant, no one knew, more than to hear angry words and see one man fall, when a bayonet in the hands of the other was driven through his breast.

A cocked revolver was found upon Manton Mayhew, and Sergeant Wallace Weston had said that he killed his brother sergeant because the two quarreled and he was in a rage.

More than this he would not say, and the court-martial that tried him could not get him to, and so he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be shot.

The men remembered his bearing, they recalled that he had not weakened through all, and when the chance offered itself to escape he had daringly made the effort.

Now, as they approached his body, lying by the rock, they were sad at the fate that had been his, yet mentally decided that it had better be thus than an execution.

As Buffalo Bill rode by the side of Lieutenant Tompkins toward the rock, and then came within a hundred yards of it, a pack of snarling coyotes were seen to suddenly dash out of the shadow and go across the plain

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with a lope natural to them, glancing back as they did so in fury at being driven from their prey.

"The cowardly brutes! They have already been tearing him to pieces," said Buffalo Bill, and, raising his rifle, he fired several shots at long range.

Each shot brought down a coyote, and this sent the others off at a speed which only those brutes can make when really frightened.

As the troop neared the rock, they beheld horse and rider lying near together.

Both had been the prey of the desert dogs, for the face and hands of the fugitive sergeant had been torn beyond recognition, and the sharp teeth of the pack had slashed the animal's flanks in many places.

The soldier's clothing was badly torn, and the saddle, bridle and trappings were still upon the horse.

The horse was soon stripped of his trappings, and the blankets of the scout, attached to the saddle, served as shroud and coffin for the dead sergeant, who was wrapped tightly in them, and tied securely with the stake rope.

With their sabers, the soldiers began to dig a grave close under the rock, Buffalo Bill remarking that, when the grave was half filled in, the huge stone, by their united strength, could be rolled upon it, and become a monument, while it would also save the body from being torn up by the coyotes.

This plan was followed, and Lieutenant Tompkins, with uncovered head, repeated the burial service for the dead over the unfortunate sergeant, whose life had been a mystery to his companions, and who had met such a sad end.

"Poor fellow! He simply starved to death, and, with the heat, could stand it no longer," said the scout.

"But why should his horse have died so soon, Cody?"

"We do not know how fresh or used up the animal was, lieutenant. In fact, he may have been half dead when found by Sergeant Weston."

"True."

"And then, too, I noticed that one chamber of my revolver, the one lying near the sergeant's hand, was empty."

"You think that he may have shot his horse, then?"

"It might be, in a fit of despair, not wishing to die alone, he may have killed the animal."

"Poor fellow! But, is it not strange that coyotes should be so far from water, Cody?"

"Those little, cowardly dogs, sir, have a wonderful scent for food, and an instinct, too, that is remarkable. They may have followed the sergeant, feeling sure that he was going to his death."

"Which is quite probable. But come, we have followed Weston to the end, and must be on our return, for I have no desire to see any of my men and horses go under."

"It is growing late, yet we must push on to the water to-night, Cody."

"By all means, sir, for both men and horses' sake. I can measure the strain upon them here on the desert."

"Yes, and I can feel it," answered the lieutenant.

The heads of the horses were at once turned upon the homeward trail, and they needed no urging on their way, for they knew that their destination was the motte, where water and grass awaited them.

Backward glances were cast by the soldiers at the grave in the desert, marked by the solitary rock, and all felt sad

at the fate of the man who had died there alone and in suffering.

The night camp was made in the motte, and the following night, just at sunset, the party returned to the fort.

Lieutenant Tompkins at once made his report, and Sergeant Wallace Weston was put down as dead, while the young officer was thanked by the major for his services, and Buffalo Bill also for having guided the party to where the trail of the fugitive ended.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUN FOR LIFE.

The man who had so bravely made a strike for his life, when all hope seemed gone, when he was surrounded, as it were, by a couple of hundred men, when death's shadow was falling upon him as he stood at the head of the open grave dug to receive his body, had calculated well his chances of escape, and quickly determined to risk them.

The arrival of Buffalo Bill, his horse standing near, the open side of the square, the stream and timber beyond, were all seen in a flash, and then came the thought that failure could only bring death, a volley and all would be over.

So it was that Sergeant Wallace Weston made the desperate rush for life, bounding to the side of the scout's horse, and with a mighty leap throwing himself into the saddle.

He forced the horse over the bank, arose from the depths and went swiftly toward the other shore.

Turning in his saddle, he wondered why he had not been greeted with a volley, and then remembered that the guns of the soldiers were unloaded, that no one would fire without orders, that the men would have to be taken out of their position in square and formed in line, muskets loaded, and then fire.

Military discipline had saved him thus far.

Then he saw Buffalo Bill level his revolver and pull the trigger.

He ducked in his saddle, for he well knew the scout's deadly aim.

The shot falling near him in the water, another on the bank, and each bullet flying wide, he said, grimly:

"He would not kill me—he aimed to miss me. I'll never forget brave Buffalo Bill for that."

A few hundred yards had been gone over, and the man realized that the horse he rode was far from fresh, and he recalled that the scout had made a hard ride to try and get a reprieve for him.

But his chances were desperate, and the horse must suffer to save him.

He forced him ahead as hard as he dared, for he knew that it would not be half an hour before cavalry would be upon his track, and, if he could escape them until night-fall, in the darkness he might be able to completely elude pursuit.

He held straight on until he reached the range of hills, which he crossed, and, descending, headed for the desert.

"They will not follow me there," he murmured, and, examining the outfit of the scout, he found that he had with him a couple of days' rations, at least, a canteen of water, roll of blankets, with the rifle and ammunition in plenty.

As he reached the desert, he saw dark objects on the

slope of the hill, visible in the rays of the setting sun, and he knew that they were troopers in pursuit of him.

"They can follow me no further than the desert, for then they must halt, and I will have a night's start of them, even if my horse fails me and I am on foot," he murmured, as he rode along in the gathering gloom of coming night.

With the heat of day no longer oppressing him, and a drink of water just as he left the hills, the horse rallied somewhat, and was urged steadily along out upon the desert.

Proceeding in a walk, after darkness came, the fugitive continued his flight, until the moon rose and lighted his way.

He could see nothing of his pursuers, and at last decided to halt for the night, out of mercy for the noble animal he rode.

He bathed the nostrils of the horse, to refresh him, spread a blanket upon the sand, and, grasping the rein, lay down to rest, after eating a small piece of deer meat and a cracker.

Worn out with all he had passed through, he did not awake, as he had expected, at midnight, but slept on until the dawn was near at hand.

Then he awoke with a start, looked about him for a moment, and all the horror of his situation flashed upon him.

"I must get away from here, for even now they may be near me.

"Poor horse, without food and water, and day upon us, you, indeed, will have a hard time of it."

Quickly rolling up his blanket, and throwing it over the saddle, he mounted, and rode on, to soon discover that the troopers were not far away, and, coming upon his trail like men who meant to capture him, suffer what they might in the effort to do so.

Ahead of him loomed up green trees and the presence of water and grass for his horse.

Was it one of those mirages of which he had so often heard, luring the traveler on to death?

He half feared so until he saw that his horse also beheld the green trees, scented the water, and pushed on more rapidly, with ears bent forward and every now and then giving a low neigh of delight.

"It will save you, good horse, for you are hardly able to bear me now," said the fugitive, and he urged his horse on, for his own lips were parched, his throat dry, and he had eaten nothing since the few mouthfuls the evening before.

At last the motte, the green oasis in the desert, was reached, and, rushing up to the little stream flowing from the spring, the horse shoved his nose deep down into its cool depths.

As the rider sprang from the saddle, he uttered a cry of delight, for there, not a hundred yards away, was a fine animal gazing at him, with a curious look, as though wondering who and what he was.

The man at once started toward the strange horse, and was glad that he did not run from him.

He succeeded in catching him, and leading him up to the noble animal that had borne him so long a distance and so well, quickly transferred the saddle and bridle from him to his fresh mount.

Filling his canteen then with cool water, and with an

affectionate caress to the most noble animal he was leaving, he mounted and rode away from the spring.

Halting at the last grassy plot, he hastily pulled enough for a small feed, wrapped it in his blanket, and, mounting, rode on once more, and just as the troopers were coming rapidly toward the motte.

"This horse is fresh, their horses are dead beat, and Fate, after providing me with this fresh mount, will not allow me to be retaken."

As he so mused aloud, a different look came over his face, the expression of stern resolve to bear up against despair faded away, and he had the appearance of one filled with hope for the present.

He looked back, and saw that the troopers rode into the motte, that they halted there, and after a short rest a few came on.

But he had no fear now, apparently, and rode on his course, though at times he seemed to hesitate as to which way he should go.

When darkness came, he again camped upon the desert, giving his horse half of the grass he had brought for him, and a few swallows of water from his canteen.

When dawn broke, he was again in the saddle, and, after riding for several hours, beheld a rock ahead.

The horse seemed to wish to go directly to it, and he had observed several times that the animal was inclined to go his own way.

Now he rode directly for the large boulder, neighing a couple of times, and, as he approached it, he saw a pack of coyotes go whining away.

"Coyotes away out here on the desert mean that they have found food there," he muttered, and when he rode up to the rock he made a startling discovery.

There lay the form of a man, clad in buckskin and miner's dress combined.

His hat was near, and he lay with his head upon his saddle, a blanket beneath him and a bridle and trappings near.

The face and hands of the man had been disfigured but slightly, showing that the coyotes had not long before found their game.

Raising his rifle, he fired several shots, which sent the voracious brutes scattering far away over the desert.

Then he gave the balance of the grass he had with him to his horse, and unsaddled him, while he began to search the body of the man he had found dead there in the desert.

Unwrapping his blankets, he discovered a buckskin roll, in which were a few trinkets, a watch, chain, ring and sleeve-buttons, with several photographs and a map with a "key" attached to it.

There was a bundle of letters and some papers, all of which the fugitive glanced over carefully, and with varying expressions coming and going upon his face the while.

At last from his lips broke a wild, exultant shout, followed by a burst of laughter, as he cried:

"By Heaven, but the star of my destiny is in the ascendant, for again has fortune favored me!

"Yes, this map and key, and these papers tell me where I can find untold wealth—where I can dig a fortune from the earth in bright, yellow gold!

"This poor fellow has died here, starved to death, and, as I live, I believe this is his horse, which has strayed back to where he could find grass and water.

"Yes, for the animal would come in this direction, and this was his master!

"Being dead, this poor piece of clay needs not the fortune I have found on his dead body—no, it is mine, mine!"

"Ha! what thought is this that comes to me?"

"By Heaven, I'll do it; and, if the troopers yet follow my trail, they will find my clothes on a body half devoured by coyotes, the scout's saddle, bridle and rifle, and the horse they saw me ride away from the motte lying dead by my side, for I must make the deceit a perfect one.

"Yes, Wallace Weston will be reported as having died upon the desert, while in reality he will be far from here, digging a fortune out of the earth.

"Ha! ha! ha! I am now defiant, for I was not born to die as this poor wretch has."

With this, he drew off his uniform and the clothes of the dead man, and quickly made the exchange, taking from his pocket a small pair of shears and cutting away the beard, which he did not wish to betray him.

When all was ready, he took up the saddle and trappings of the dead man, and, raising his rifle, shot the horse that had served him so well.

"It is cruel, but the brute must die for the human," he said, in a low tone, and then walked rapidly away from the spot.

Glancing back when far away, he smiled grimly as he saw the coyotes sneaking back to devour their prey.

He hurried from the rock in the gathering gloom, carrying with him his load of the saddle, bridle and outfit of the man he had found dead.

"If found by the men who are pursuing me, they will bury him, and that will end my career to the world.

"I would like to put the poor fellow in a grave, but then he serves me too well to permit of that.

"What a coincidence, that he should be just my size, and with his beard cut off not unlike me, he will readily pass for me.

"Ah, me! what is before me now, I wonder?"

"After all that has come up in my favor, I cannot but believe that the future holds more in store for me than has the past.

"Now, let me see! Which way will I go?"

"Why, back the way I came, of course, for I can find that oasis in the desert that served me so well before, and from there to the mountains can be made in a day's journey, though I must approach them by night, so as to be seen by any one who may be in the hills.

"Then, too, the Land of Gold is in that direction, and thither I go now, for there lies my future.

"Somewhere I will pick up a horse, so I will carry this rig, heavy as it is.

"Now, turning my face upon the past, I front the future, and all that it has in store for me."

Thus he mused, as he stood in the desert, with the moon rising to light his way.

Having decided, he took his course, from the rising moon showing him the points of the compass, and set off upon the back trail.

Walking, as he was, he knew that he could hide where horsemen could not, and he could hear the tramp of cavalry far away.

His tracks would make no impression, so his trail could not be followed.

On he went over the moonlit desert, keeping up a steady

tramp until midnight, when he ate sparingly of the little food he had secured with the scout's haversack, and took a few swallows of water.

With the saddle, bridle, lariat, rifle and belt of arms of the dead miner, the canteen, blankets and ammunition, he had a weight of sixty pounds to carry.

But he was a powerfully-built man, and walked along without seeming effort.

At last, having kept up a brisk walk all night, he saw the dark shadows ahead that marked the outline of the little clump of timber in the desert, with its cool spring to refresh him.

He walked more briskly now, anxious to enter its shelter while it was yet dark, for he knew not but that his pursuers might be camped there.

The sun, however, rose before he reached the timber, and, as he gazed into its shadows, he halted.

After all he had passed through, were his pursuers lurking there for him?

If so, they saw him, and were awaiting his coming.

To escape now would be impossible, if he was seen, so he would go boldly on and face the ordeal, whatever it might be.

So on he went, with firm tread, stern face, and ready to face the worst.

He entered the timber, his heart in his throat, as it felt to him, yet calm of mien.

He had more to live for now than ever, for he held in his possession the secret of a mine which the papers attached to it said was a fortune of gold.

Must he lose all now?

But not a sound broke the stillness, not a leaf stirred, not a moving thing was in sight.

Straight to the spring he went, and quenched his thirst, and then he ate his breakfast, but partook very sparingly.

Bathing his feet and refreshing himself with the cool water, he walked over to where there was a thicket, and, creeping in among the cedars, spread his blankets, and lay down to rest.

Worn out, he slept soundly, and he heard not the tramp of horses, but was awakened by the sound of voices.

He half arose, with a start, to see a squad of cavalry riding into the timber.

Leading them, as guide, came Buffalo Bill, and an officer, whom he recognized as Lieutenant Tompkins, followed, with the troopers in his rear.

To try to escape would result in instant discovery, and yet it seemed hardly possible that he could avoid detection if they remained there long.

Scarcely daring to breathe, he lay flat upon the ground, and awaited the result of their coming.

He heard them talking distinctly, and his name was mentioned.

The horses were turned loose, and this indicated a stay of at least some hours.

Fires were built to cook food, and the weary men sought shady places to rest, but not one came into the thicket, though they threw themselves near by, in its shade.

Fortunately, the thicket kept off what little breeze there was blowing, and they avoided it, anxious to get what air they could.

Lying flat upon his back, the hunted man, drenched with perspiration, his heart beating violently, lay as still as death, awaiting life or death, as it might be to him.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOLD-HUNTER.

The hours dragged by like days to Wallace Weston, as he lay there in the thicket, with his comrades not two hundred feet from him, some coming near enough to have seen him, had attention been attracted into the cedars, which, fortunately for him, it was not.

At last the shadows grew longer, the rays of the sunlight gilded the treetops, then that faded away and twilight settled over all, followed by darkness.

The hunted sergeant breathed more freely then, but yet knew that he was not safe, not until the soldiers left the thicket.

He heard the conversation between Buffalo Bill and the lieutenant, as to what was best to be done toward pursuing him, and then knew that the soldiers had sought their blankets for the night.

Still, he dared not go to sleep, and only felt that he was able to change his position, for he had been lying flat upon his back for hours.

Again the hours dragged along into a tedious length of time, and it appeared an age to him before he heard the call for the men to saddle up and be ready to start.

The moon was riding high in the heavens now, and he could see the troopers moving about, and at last form in line, awaiting the command to mount and start on their way.

When at last he saw Buffalo Bill ride away, the lieutenant and his men following, he could hardly refrain from giving a shout of triumph.

He had not eaten a mouthful since he had thrown himself down to rest, and his canteen lay some yards away, and he dared not make an effort to get it, so he was suffering for both food and water.

The moment the troopers rode away, he arose and reconnoitered carefully, to see that none had remained.

He then arose, gathered up his things, and went to the spring, where he quenched his thirst, after which he ate again, sparingly, of the little food he had left.

Refilling his canteen with cool water, he shouldered his belongings and started at a brisk step away from the timber, taking the same trail by which he had come.

The fear came to him that the pursuers might give him up, once they got some distance from the timber, and he felt the full heat of the desert, and for them to return would be to overtake him.

But he had an hour or more before daylight came, and had made a long distance in that time.

The sun rose, but still he pressed on, for the goal he sought was among the mountains ahead, which looked so near, yet were so far away.

On, on he trudged, feeling now that he must approach the mountains by day, with the danger behind him, for of the two dangers he must choose the least.

With a bite of food now and then, a frequent swallow of water from his canteen, and not daring to halt for rest, fearing his limbs would become stiff and painful.

The sun at last disappeared behind the mountains, and yet the mountains were miles away.

All trace of the timber in his rear had long since disappeared, and he knew that he had tramped many a long mile; but hope of shelter and safety lay before him, and so on he went.

At last he reached the slope, climbing the foothills, and toward midnight had reached the mountain range.

His path lighted by the moon, he went on until he came to a mountain stream, and then, seeking a secluded spot, he spread his blanket, ate a little food, and, hardly able to stand, lay down to sleep.

In an instant almost he was fast asleep, and when he awoke the sun was shining in his face.

Plunging into the stream, after a good bath, he felt refreshed, and the last of his food was eaten with a relish.

Then he shouldered his traps once more and pressed on, on, wending his steps toward a region which his knowledge of the frontier told him no one went near, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, of which wonderful tales were told around the campfires, weird stories of a strange country which no white man dared penetrate, and which the Indians said was the abode of evil spirits.

He knew that, as he went on, there was no danger of being pursued in that direction, that all danger from those who had been his comrades lay behind him, and that what danger there was ahead he would not worry about until he had to face it.

Suddenly he saw, crossing his trail ahead, a fawn, feeding as it went, all unconscious of his presence.

Quickly his rifle sprang to his shoulder, the flash and the report followed, and the deer dropped dead.

With food at hand, he built a fire, and soon enjoyed a hearty meal, after which he still pressed on until he came to a hilltop, which gave him a view of a vast expanse of country, with the Grand Canyon of the Colorado visible far away in the distance.

A cheer burst from his lips at the sight, and he cried, in exultant tones:

"There lies my promised land!

"In yonder Grand Canyon is the gold mine I seek, the treasure that is to make me a rich man."

And there he stood, gazing upon the wonderful scene, until the shadows of night fell about him.

The morning dawned grand and beautiful, and the gold-hunter arose from his blankets and gazed about him, with a look of admiration, as he beheld the scene.

Suddenly there attracted his eye a column of smoke floating upward from the timber bordering the rim of the mighty chasm, a mountain split in twain, that marked what is known as the "Grand Canyon," the most wonderful of nature's work.

"What does that smoke mean, I wonder?" muttered the gold-hunter.

"Indians do not go there, I have heard Buffalo Bill and others say, so it must be white men.

"But who?"

"The man whose clothes I have on, whose map and belongings I have, certainly went there, and found a gold mine, too.

"His diary says that he neither saw Indian or paleface the year that he was in the Grand Canyon, and so I must be very cautious, and see just who I am to meet.

"His papers also direct me to where he left a *cache* containing several months' provisions, and other things that will be useful, and I must follow the directions on the map

and find them; but first let me go to see what yonder smoke holds in store for me."

Eating the cold deer meat left over from his supper the night before, for he dared not build a fire to cook more, the gold-hunter started on his way once more, toward the curling smoke, all of a dozen miles away.

In that pure air, walking is but little effort, and he made good progress until he reached the timberland, above which he had seen the column of smoke ascending.

Then he went forward very cautiously, having taken his bearings of the locality, so that he could find the camp without trouble, and at the same time keep out of view himself.

Reaching an open space in the timber, he beheld the camp upon a hilltop, and saw that the fire was still burning.

From the nature of the ground about it, Wallace Weston was convinced that the camp had a canyon at the back of it, and, with the open space in front, was well protected against surprise.

The canyon was, therefore, his best way to get near it unseen, and he accordingly flanked along through the timber, keeping well out of sight, until he came to where the hill broke off abruptly.

Here he saw the canyon, which his knowledge of woodcraft told him was the one that ran up in the rear of the camp.

Up this he went, the sides gradually growing steeper, until he had gone fully a mile.

There he halted, deposited his traps and rifle, and began to climb up the steep sides, the top of the cliff being all of a hundred feet in height.

It was a dangerous and tedious climb, but he at last reached the top, and peered over carefully.

His face changed color instantly at what he beheld.

There was the camp, for he had calculated well, not twenty-five feet from him.

There was a wicky-up there, as though the camp was not one of a night, and a couple of horses were staked out not far distant.

The fire was still smoldering, and near it lay a huge dog, with a most savage-looking face.

But the animal was asleep, and, the wind being favorable to the gold-hunter, he did not observe his presence so near, or scent him.

"There is a customer to look out for, though I never yet saw the dog I was afraid of."

"Still, he looks ugly, and he guards the camp."

There, clinging to the cliff, and peering over it, the sergeant took in all there was about the camp, and was preparing to crawl over the rim of rock and enter it, when he saw a movement in the wickyup.

"Ah, there is some one there, after all."

"Well, I must face whoever it is, for, if a white man, I hardly have anything to fear."

So saying, he drew himself up over the edge of the cliff, and, with revolver in hand, cautiously approached the camp.

He had gone but a few steps, when the eyes of the dog opened, and, with a savage yelp of surprise and anger, he bounded toward the intruder, who saw that he had a very dangerous brute to deal with.

But he did not flinch, did not show the slightest sign of fear of the savage animal, appearing like one who held

his salvation in his own hands, and was well aware of the fact.

With a voice that rang out sternly, he cried:

"Down, you devil! down, sir!"

The dog halted, looked at the intruder curiously, met the unflinching gaze fixed upon him, and realized that he had met his match.

Instantly he dropped his head, giving only a vicious growl, as though still struggling to terrify the one who sought to subdue him.

Quickly the soldier stepped toward him, gave him a kick, and said, sternly:

"Down, sir!"

The dog dropped at his feet, wholly subdued, just as a voice came from the shadow of the wickyup, crying:

"My God! who are you?"

The voice was that of a man, and the words came as in intense surprise, while there was a pathos in them as though the speaker was suffering either in mind or body.

With half a dozen strides, still holding his revolver ready, the soldier stepped to the wickyup, the dog trotting now humbly at his knees, and completely subdued.

He saw, lying on the blankets spread under the shelter, the form of a man, his face pale and haggard and his hands and feet securely bound.

His face was bearded, his hair long and unkempt, and his appearance seedy, for his dress, that of a miner, and his boots and hat were worn out, almost.

"And I ask the same question—who are you?" said Wallace Weston, impressively, as he gazed down upon him.

"I am one in distress, one over whom the shadow of death has fallen, to soon end all."

"I am a poor unfortunate, held a prisoner here by one whose greed for gold is far greater than his humanity!"

The words were uttered with evident effort, and the eyes of the speaker were fixed upon the intruder into the camp, who stood gazing at him in wonder and pity.

"How did you get here and not be torn to pieces by that savage brute?" asked the man in the wickyup, as the other did not speak.

"I do not fear dogs."

"But you are known to him?"

"Oh, no, though he now knows me as his master—see—"

"Down, sir!"

The dog obediently dropped at the soldier's feet, while the one in the wickyup said:

"Wonderful! That brute is my guard, and would tear me to pieces did I attempt to leave this spot."

"Who are you, that possesses such power over a brute?"

After a moment of hesitation, the answer came:

"I am a gold-hunter; by name, Andrew Seldon."

Andrew Seldon was the name on the papers of the dead gold-hunter he had found in the desert, and Wallace Weston determined to make it his own.

"And I, too, was a gold-hunter, and came here with one I deemed my friend, in search of the precious metal."

"I was a geologist, had experience as a prospector, and he who now holds me a prisoner profited by my knowledge, and when at last I struck it rich, found a mine, he showed the cloven foot, believing that he could go to it."

"He shot me down, as he believed killing me, and at

once went in search of the find I had made, guided by what I had told him.

"But in vain he searched; he could not find the gold, and, cursing himself for being so hasty, he returned to camp, to find that his bullet had not proven fatal.

"Instantly he threw himself upon his knees by my side, begged me to forgive him, said that he was mad, and knew not what he did.

"Fool that I was, I believed that he was sorry, and forgave him. Most tenderly he cared for me during weeks of suffering, until at last, a few days ago, I was able to go about.

"Then he asked me to take him to my mine.

"I refused to do so at that time, asking him to wait until I was a little stronger, and at once he showed his true nature again.

"Frankly, he told me that he would kill me unless I told him where the gold was.

"I refused to do so, and so, making that huge brute hold me at bay, he bound me hand and foot, and so I have been for a week.

"Each day he leaves camp in search of the gold, and that dog is my guard, while he has told me that if he does not find it by next Sunday, three days away now, he will kill me, and he is one to keep his word."

Wallace Weston had listened attentively to the words of the sufferer; then he bent over and quickly unbound the lariat that held him so securely.

"You are in no danger now, for you are a free man, and can meet your cruel foe upon equal terms."

"Would that I could, but I am as weak and helpless as a child."

"Then I shall protect you, and your enemy will have me to deal with.

"What is your name, may I ask?"

"Lucas Langley."

"Well, friend Langley, I will remain here in the wickiup until your enemy comes and meets me. Will you tell me who and what he is?"

"His name is Hugh Mayhew, though he is known in the camps as Black Heart Bill, for he was a desperado of the worst type.

"I was a fool to come with him on this gold trail, but, then, I had saved his life, and he was always most friendly toward me, though a terror to others, and I trusted him; but now, from his own lips, I know that he wished me to come along to find gold for him, which, when found, meant my death—but, sir, you are as white as death!" and the miner gazed with amazement into the face of the man who had told him his name was Andrew Seldon.

With an effort, he recovered himself, and said, though his voice was hoarse with suppressed feeling:

"Yes, it is from your recalling a name I heard long ago, and that I can never forget.

"Hugh Mayhew, you said?"

"Yes, sir, that is his real name, though, as I told you, he is better known in this wild region as Black Heart Bill."

"A name well fitted to him and his evil life, for I know him, and I tell you now, Mr. Lucas Langley, that I also have a score to settle with Black Heart Bill, and that means that it shall be his life or mine," and the face of the speaker showed the miner that he was in deadly earnest.

The miner was deeply impressed by the words and man-

ner of the one who had come before him almost as an apparition, and was there, as he said, to protect him, when he was unable, from his long suffering from his wound and being bound, to help himself.

"You really know this man Mayhew, then, Pard Seldon?" asked the miner.

"I do know him only too well, for I met him years ago; but we will not speak of that now, as I desire to be ready for his return.

"When do you expect him back to camp?"

"In an hour or so, for his time for returning varies, as he comes back to dinner sometimes, and then again not until night."

"Well, when he comes I will be ready for him, and you had better keep up the appearance of being still bound."

"I will do as you say, sir."

"I will give you one of my revolvers, and——"

"My own are there, for you see my belt hanging on the tree yonder."

"I will get it for you, and you remain in the wickiup, while I hide yonder behind the roots of that tree which has blown down."

"Yes."

"When he returns to camp, I will have my eye on him, and hear what he has to say to you.

"At the proper moment I will appear——"

"And kill him?"

"I will not shoot him down, as he deserves, but give him a chance for his life."

"No, no, for he is the deadliest of shots, full of nerve, has plenty of courage, and is merciless."

"Still, I will meet him on equal terms; but how are you with a revolver?"

"I am a good shot."

"Well, if he kills me, then your own chance for life is to shoot him down, and a few days' rest will make you able to travel, and you can return to your mine, or go where you please."

"Thank you, pard; but let me tell you that, though I would be merciful to any one else, yet it will not do with Black Heart Bill to give him any chance whatever, for it will be fatal to you."

"Still, I will do so, for I would not murder even that man, vile as he is.

"From which direction does he come?"

"From down the valley yonder."

"And he is off prospecting now?"

"Yes, for my mine, for he looks only for that now."

"Have you anything to eat in camp?"

"Yes, over by the fire you will find plenty that was left from breakfast; coffee, venison steak and hoeecake."

The gold-hunter went to the fire, set the coffee-pot upon the coals, and found in the frying-pan a good steak and some bread.

He ate heartily, and felt much refreshed, after which he returned to the wickiup and continued to talk with the miner until the latter said, quickly:

"He is coming.

"See, that brute is pricking up his ears."

"All right," said the gold-hunter, with the utmost sang froid, "I will be ready for him.

"Throw that rope about your ankles and wrists, as though you were still bound, and I will seek my hiding-place."

With this, the gold-hunter quickly sought the spot he had selected, a hole made by a tree having been blown up by the roots, and where there was a secure hiding-place, not twenty feet from the wickiup.

The dog sat out near the fire, his ears pricked up and his eyes watching down the valley, where there soon came into view a horseman, riding at a gallop.

"It's Black Heart Bill, as I thought.

"That dog always scents him a long way off," said Lucas Langley, from his place in the brush shelter.

"All right; I am ready for him," came the quiet response, and the eyes of the gold-hunter were fixed upon the coming horseman, as he peered through a hole in the mass of interwoven roots.

At last the horseman came clearly into view, and the gold-hunter saw that he was well mounted and equipped, carrying, in addition to his belt of arms, a rifle across his saddle.

The horse came along at a lope, straight for camp, and, arriving near, the rider dismounted, took off the saddle and bridle, and staked the animal out near the other two animals.

Walking briskly up toward the camp, the man leaned his rifle against a tree, and turned toward the wickiup.

He was a man above the medium height, well built, and his movements were quick and decided.

He wore a long beard, his hair fell upon his broad shoulders, and his face was darkly bronzed, handsome, expressive, and yet one to dread, for in it lurked a look of utter recklessness, while there was a cruel curl to his lip and an evil glitter in his eyes.

He was dressed in buckskin, top boots and large rimmed slouch hat, and at a glance, if one did not study his evil face closely, looked to be a magnificent creature, the very picture of a border hero.

But one studying his face for a moment would fear, not like or respect, Black Heart Bill, the man who had won the name from his brother miners of being a man without a heart, pity, or a noble impulse.

Such was the man whom the gold-hunter had voluntarily agreed to face in a struggle for life or death.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DESPERADO'S THREAT.

The man's face, as he strode toward the wickiup, where Lucas Langley, his victim, lay, pretending to be still bound, was full of malignancy, and his eyes lurid with an evil resolve.

"See here, Langley, I have hunted over every foot of land which you have been able to prospect since we came into this country, and I can find not the slightest trace of gold or silver, only some rich copper ore.

"Now I came to this country expecting to find gold through your knowledge of minerals, and I know, from the few nuggets you brought into camp that you struck it rich."

"You are right, I did; but what the find will pan out when worked I do not know," was the quiet answer.

"Well, I'll take chances on its being a rich find, and I am willing to go halves with you if you take me to it."

"Yes, go halves until the opportunity offers to shoot me dead."

"I am tired of longer delay, and I swear to you, by

Heaven, Langley, that I will kill you within ten minutes if you do not swear to mount your horse and guide me to that gold."

"I will not do so, to be killed by you as soon as you know the secret."

"You refuse?"

"I do."

"Well, I'll give you the ten minutes, and if you do not consent then I will put a bullet through your heart as you lie there."

"And never find it then."

"I'll be better off, at least with you out of the way, for my provisions will last longer, and I can change my camp at will, not being tied down by your being unable to go."

"You placed me here by trying to kill me."

"Yes, and curse you, you would not die.

"You have as many lives as a cat," and the man took another glance at the watch he held in his hand, while he continued, speaking with the utmost deliberation:

"It is now just ten minutes to one o'clock, and when the hands point to one I will kill you.

"If you decide at the last minute to weaken, call out, but be quick, for I will have my finger on the trigger to pull it."

"Would you shoot a man now prostrated by your shooting him down without mercy two months ago, a man bound hand and foot, and wholly in your power?"

"Of course I would. Have you forgotten my record as Black Heart Bill?"

"Alas, no, I believe you are capable of any crime."

"You should know me, when you saw what I did in the mines."

"I remember but too well."

"Then do not hesitate, unless you wish to be shot, and left here for the coyotes to pick your bones."

"I care not what becomes of my body after I am dead; but I did hope for some mercy from a man whose life I saved at the risk of my own."

"Bah! what care I for sentiment? My race were not born chicken-hearted, and I will not be the one to show that I am not worthy of my ancestors by showing the white feather when it is only a man's life that my bullet snuffs out like a candle," and the man gave a bitter, mocking laugh.

"Well, I shall not weaken, Black Heart Bill, so do your worst."

"I will; but I will be merciful, for I will give you a chance to pray, and I would like to hear a man on the eve of death praying for his soul's safety."

"Will you free my hands?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"I wish it."

"You wish to clasp them in prayer, eh?"

"Well, that is simply a fancy to clasp the hands and bow the head, for it does not make the words any more binding. No, you shall die at the end of your prayer, and the crack of my revolver will emphasize the Amen."

"Black Heart Bill, you are more of a brute than that savage dog of yours!"

"Why not, for I have the human brain with the brute nature to make me so. But your time is about up, so say your prayers, and remember that I will yet find your

gold mine and revel in your wealth. Come! pray if you intend to, for you are doomed to die within just two minutes," and the villain glanced at his watch once more and turned to step to the tree a few feet away, where he had hung his belt of arms when he came into camp.

But as he turned he heard the startling words:

"And you are doomed, Hugh Mayhew! Hands up, quick! for I am as merciless as you are."

A startled cry broke from the lips of Hugh Mayhew, and his face became livid at hearing a strange voice behind him, when he had not beheld a human being with the exception of Lucas Langley and himself, within a hundred miles of where they were encamped.

Then, too, he beheld the tall form of the gold-hunter between him and his belt of arms, and knew that he was at his mercy, for a revolver, held in a hand as firm as a rock, with an eye glancing along the sights that did not quail, and the muzzle pointed directly at his heart, covered him, and something very like a moan of despair came from between his set teeth.

Realizing that he was unarmed, and facing a revolver in the hands of a dangerous man, Black Heart Bill, with the training he had had on the border, did not hesitate to obey the command and raise his hands above his head.

"Does that satisfy you?" he growled.

"For the present, yes."

"By Heaven! but I know that face!" cried the desperado.

"Do you think you do?"

"I know it."

"If I am the one you think, then you must know how little claim you have on me for mercy, Hugh Mayhew."

"Ha! I knew I was not mistaken, for you have not a face to forget."

"Especially under the circumstances when you saw it last."

"Yes, they said you had not died as we supposed, but had recovered and left the country," and Black Heart Bill spoke rather to himself than to the man who had faced him, spoke as though he was recalling the past.

"No, I did not die, as many believed, but am alive and hold you at my mercy this time, Hugh Mayhew."

"You would not kill me in cold blood, would you?"

"If I did, it would be doing by you just as you would by me."

"I would at least give a man a chance for his life."

"You lie, for but two minutes ago you vowed to kill that poor man there, whom you had already shot down."

"It is false, for I shot him by accident, and I was only trying to frighten him into telling me something I wished to know."

"Again you lie, Hugh Mayhew, for if you shot him once in cold blood you would again, and you have a record of being merciless, while I happened to hear all that you said, listened to your threat from my hiding-place there, and had I not held you up your victim would now be a dead man."

"No, you should expect no mercy from me, Hugh Mayhew."

"Yet I do."

"You ask it?"

"Yes."

"You plead to me for mercy?"

"I can do nothing else."

"Well, you know what it is to be cornered, to have one have the drop on you."

"Yes, you now suffer as you have made others suffer, as you have made your victim feel, the man who saved your life at the risk of his own, the man who came to this country trusting you, believing that he had at least the hold of friendship upon you."

"How know you this?"

"Simply from his own lips, and now by your own admission that it is true."

"I owe him nothing."

"You square all debts by death, Mayhew; but yet I will show you mercy."

"I felt that you would."

"You judged me from being your opposite."

"Well, let us shake hands and be friends."

"Shake hands with you?" roared the gold-hunter. "I touch your hand? By Heaven, but I'd rather place my hand upon the head of the most poisonous of reptiles, Hugh Mayhew. Oh, no, if I have to put my hand upon yours, it will be when I have killed you, and I have to fold your hands in death across your coward heart, for when dead, then only will I not hate you."

The man had lost his calm manner, his voice quivered, his eyes flashed and he spoke with savage vehemence which caused his enemy, be his crime against him in the past what it might, to cower before him in fear.

"You said that you would spare me."

"I said that I would not kill you without mercy, that I would give you a chance for your life."

"What chance?"

"I will show you."

"Mr. Langley, come here, please."

To the horror of Black Heart Bill, Lucas Langley, his victim, whom he believed to be still bound, arose and came slowly toward the gold-hunter, carrying his revolver in his hand.

"Pard Langley, step off twenty paces, please, here on the level ground, mark each end, and also the center between them."

"You understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Place one of that man's revolvers at one end, one of mine at the other, looking at both to see that they are loaded and in perfect condition."

"Then with your own revolver in hand, and cocked, take your stand near the center position."

"I will escort Mayhew to the starting point, both of us unarmed and facing each other."

"At your order:

"'Right about wheel, forward, march,' we both step off for our respective end of the twenty paces, going at a pace which you regulate by calling out aloud the numbers up to ten."

"I understand, sir, and will do as you say; but as this man is my foe, as he sought my life, and to rob me, had me come with him here to this weird land just to profit by my work and then to kill me, I feel that I, not you, should be the one to face him in this duel," said Lucas Langley.

"My dear friend, with all that this man, so justly named Black Heart Bill, has done to you, his crimes against me have been far more, and I alone am the one

to face him now in what shall be a fight to the death," was the stern rejoinder of the sergeant, and he added:

"Now let this duel be fought."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DESPERADO'S LAST CHANCE.

The situation there in that lone camp was a painful one, for there stood three men, one the foe of two of them, and the scene was soon to have the shadow of death fall upon it.

Black Heart Bill seemed to realize fully the situation of danger he had gotten himself into.

Where the sergeant had come from, or if he was really alone, he did not know.

But there in the wilderness, shunned by redmen and palefaces alike, but which the greed for gold had caused a few only to penetrate, he had met one he had wronged in some cruel way in the past, one who was now holding him answerable for that wrong.

To do this the fugitive sergeant had said that he would risk his own life by giving him a chance to kill him.

That Black Heart Bill was at his mercy was certain, yet he appeared not to be the man to take advantage of the fact, but to risk life in his punishment of him.

Seeing how matters stood, Lucas Langley stepped up to the fugitive sergeant and said:

"I have told you, sir, that that man was a dead shot, and you do very wrong to risk your life against his."

"Better rather let him go."

"To hang on our trail and kill us both from ambush?"

"No, you do not know him as I do, my friend."

"And you demand that he shall fight you this duel?"

"Certainly."

"But the tremendous risk to you?"

"Do you know I do not feel it to be so, for, after what I have passed through, I do not believe I am to die by that man's bullet—in fact, I am not at all troubled as to the result."

"Then I must arrange as you requested?"

"At once, please."

The miner moved slowly about, to obey, stopped off the twenty paces, marked each end, and the center with a rock, and placed one of Black Heart Bill's revolvers at one end, one of the sergeant's at the other.

Then he said:

"All is ready, so come to your positions."

The gold-hunter stepped briskly to his place, having put aside his other weapon, for Lucas Langley now held his revolver ready to fire upon him if he made any attempt to be tricky.

Black Heart Bill stood like a man who felt that he had come to a chasm he could not cross.

His eyes had wandered down the valley to the rim that marked the towering banks of the Grand Canyon, and he had gazed into space with a far-away look as though he longed to pierce the great beyond.

He moved to his position mechanically, his bronzed face having a deathly pallor now, and he stood like one who obeyed because he could not help himself.

There they stood, the two splendidly-looking men, unarmed, and back to back, their eyes upon their respective revolvers lying ten paces from them.

At one side near them Lucas Langley now took his position, and he looked weak, pale and anxious.

The gold-hunter was perfectly unmoved, save for the stern expression resting upon his mouth.

His position gave him a look down the bright sunlit valley to the Grand Canyon, and so on the Blue Buckskin Mountains beyond.

His outlook was a cheery one, if he could gain hope from that.

On the other hand, and it was by accident, Black Heart Bill faced the shadows, looking into the dark and heavy timber upon the other side of the camp.

The huge dog, which Black Heart Bill had very appropriately named Savage, seemed to realize with brute instinct that something was wrong, for he stood not far away, his tail drooped as though in fear, his eyes glaring from one to the other of the three men.

It was a scene that the actors therein could never forget—a scene made necessary from man's inhumanity to his fellowman.

A silence that was painful rested upon all, until it was broken by the voice of Lucas Langley asking:

"Are you ready?"

The gold-hunter bowed, the desperado spoke.

He said:

"I cannot say nay, for you two are determined to murder me."

The sergeant wheeled upon him and said:

"Hugh! Mayhew, if it be your lot to die, why must it be with a lie upon your lips, for am I not giving you an equal chance with myself?"

"There are two against one."

"It is not so, for I am taking the same chance that you do. If it were otherwise I would have shot you down, as your own conscience tells you that you deserve at my hands."

"That man is your friend."

"I hope that he acts for you as squarely as he does for me."

A sudden gleam came into the eyes of the desperado, as they rested upon the dog.

He saw a chance for life, and with a quick motion of his hand called, pointing to Lucas Langley:

"At him, Savage! Take his throat in your iron jaws!"

At the command of the master, the ugly brute at once gave a savage growl, his hair stood up like bristles and there was no doubt but that he would have sprung upon the one who held the revolver, Lucas Langley, who might or might not have killed him as he rushed toward him.

Then would the desperado have made a spring and seized his revolver, hoping to bring down the sergeant before he could grasp a weapon.

But the last chance of Black Heart Bill, to play a game of treachery, was thwarted by the nerve and wonderful magnetic power of the gold-hunter over the brute creation, for with a stern command to the dog, the mastered animal dropped down and the desperado was foiled.

"You are tricky to the last, Black Heart Bill, I see," calmly said the sergeant.

"Curse you, I told you that I had no chance."

"For treachery no; but otherwise the same that I have."

"Come, stand back to back with me, and move at the

word; but remember, if you attempt to quicken your pace, Mr. Langley will drop you in your tracks."

"I will, so help me, Heaven, and you know, Black Heart Bill, that I am a dead shot."

An oath was the only reply from the desperado, and then the sergeant said:

"Now, Langley, give the word, and if I fall you will find my traps over in the canyon yonder, just at the base of the cliff, and you may fall heir to what I have, but write to the address given in papers of Andrew Seldon, and share the fortune you will learn the secret of. Let me also tell you that if I fall, kill that man without mercy, for he will not spare you."

"I thank you, and will act upon your advice, and quickly; but, Heaven protect you is my prayer," fervently said Lucas Langley.

Then came from the lips of Black Heart Bill a mocking laugh, which was checked by the voice of Lucas Langley, now strong and ringing:

"Are you ready?"

"Yes," said the sergeant firmly, while Black Heart Bill said nothing.

"Forward—one! two! three!" and in the same clear tones the second called out each number, until the last, ten, was spoken, when, quickly, both men stooped, seized the revolvers at their feet, and wheeling, fired.

The two shots rung out as one, and the fugitive sergeant at once lowered his weapon, as though satisfied, while the arm of the desperado remained leveled, his hand still grasping his revolver.

But only a few seconds he stood thus, and then the revolver dropped from his hand, his arm fell to his side, his eyes glared at his enemy, until suddenly he fell heavily his full length upon the ground, a dead man.

The bullet had pierced his heart.

"Thank God!" came fervently from the lips of Lucas Langley, and, stepping forward, he grasped the hand of the sergeant, who stood looking down upon his fallen foe.

"Search his body, please, and see what he has that may be worth sending to his home, for I know where he lives."

Lucas Langley did so, finding a watch and chain, a ring, a buckskin bag of jewelry of various kinds, another of gold, a roll of bills, a notebook and several letters.

These he handed to the sergeant, who laid them aside, when he stepped up to the body, crossed the hands upon his breast, and then wrapped the form in a couple of blankets.

"I will dig a grave for him, as soon as I have brought my traps into camp," he said, and he walked away to find an easy descent into the canyon, where he had left his things.

In half an hour he had returned, and then he set to work to dig a grave with the pick and shovel of the miner.

This done, he raised the body in his strong arms, bore it to the grave and laid it away as tenderly as though the man was one whom he had cared for in life as a friend.

The grave was filled in, and returning to camp the two men, so strangely met, had supper together, and the fugitive sergeant for the first time in many a long day ate a meal in peace, without a cloud hanging over his life, and one where there was much to tempt him, for Lucas

Langley and his desperado friend had come most completely supplied to the wilderness.

After the meal was over, and the dog was fed by Lucas Langley, who wished to become friendly with him, the two talked together for an hour or more.

Then the two men wrapped themselves in their blankets and sank to sleep, leaving the dog, Savage, to be their guard through the night, though they anticipated no danger in that region, for Lucas Langley said that during his stay there with Black Heart Bill not an Indian or a white man had been seen.

CHAPTER VIII.

PARDS.

The morning dawned brightly, and Sergeant Wallace Weston arose refreshed and feeling like a new man.

Lucas Langley turned out of his blankets briskly, his mind at ease, and feeling bodily all right, he said.

The sergeant had given his name to his new-found friend as Andrew Seldon, the name of the dead miner he had found upon the desert, and whose belongings he had so strangely come in possession of.

He did not refer to his past, and was not questioned by Lucas Langley, who, however, had told him that he had had trouble in his old home which had driven him to seek a home upon the border.

What that trouble was he did not say, and the fugitive sergeant did not ask him.

Savage had guarded the camp well, and greeted the two men as they came out of the wickiup with a wagging of the tail and a look that seemed to say:

"I know when I am well off, and accept the situation without a murmur."

Andrew Seldon, as we must now call the fugitive sergeant, patted the dog on the head, and when Lucas Langley again fed him, after breakfast, the two seemed to have become most friendly.

The breakfast was a substantial one, consisting of hoe-cake, venison steaks, bacon and coffee, and both men ate with a relish.

Then Andrew Seldon had a look at the three horses, and found them all fine animals.

The guns and stores were looked over, cleaned, and all in the camp put in good readiness for a move, for Lucas Langley had said:

"We will go to our gold mine and camp, for there is a brook of water there, plenty of timber, and it is a safe retreat, with good grass for our horses."

So they packed their camp equipage upon the pack-horse, upon which Seldon placed the saddle and bridle he had brought with him so many long and weary miles, and then they set off on their trail for the camp which had so nearly cost the finder his life, and which in the end had been the cause of Black Heart Bill's death.

It was in a canyon breaking into the Grand Canyon, a fertile valley, small in size, but well-sheltered, watered and wooded.

A spot was chosen for the camp where a superb view into the Grand Canyon could be had, and their axes soon cut down small trees enough to build a fair cabin for them, and to run a fence across the head of the canyon so that the horses could not stray out when allowed to be loose.

In a couple of days they were comfortably settled, game was plentiful, there was fish in the stream, and the health of Lucas Langley had so improved that he once more considered himself a well man.

Resting on Sunday, which day followed the finishing of their work, they set to work bright and early Monday morning to hunt gold.

Lucas Langley had explained that the gold he had found was in the brook, and that he did not doubt but that they could trace it along the water bed to a mine.

So they began in the stream, wading up it, and with a bag and their pick with them.

"I've got a piece of gold," cried Andrew Seldon, holding up a fair-sized water-worn lump of precious metal.

"And I have another nugget," was the reply.

And so on, slowly up the stream they went for a mile or more, when they found that the brook started from several springs in a hill, and went no further, as Langley had hoped.

The first day ended with a fair find, of perhaps a thousand dollars in weight, and the pards retired early quite well satisfied.

But the next day the find was less, and so it went on from day to day until the bed of the stream was about cleaned out of yellow metal.

After two weeks, and after a hard day's work when the finds made only amounted to a few dollars, Andrew Seldon said:

"Pard, I believe we can do nothing more here?"

"That is my opinion unless we went to work in the hill."

"That is long and tedious work, so I suggest that we now go to my mine."

"Then you have one?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Not very far from here, and I will start bright and early in the morning, leaving you to follow with the horses and camp outfit, for I will mark my trail."

"All right, pard, and I hope it will pan out better than my find."

"It will, and I will share with you in thirds, for there is another to have a third."

"That is liberal enough, and I am satisfied."

"There is a *cache* of provisions there, too, and so we will be fixed for a winter's work."

"I am with you, pard, so you lead."

"Late in the fall it will be well for one of us to go to Fort Wingate, the nearest place to us where we can purchase provisions, and get all we may need, and mail some letters home, for I wish to send the things taken from Black Heart Bill home to his people."

"Not to tell them how he died?"

"No, except that he was killed in a duel."

"Don't send the jewelry, for it will give him away as a road-agent, for he got that by holding up stage coaches and robbing the passengers."

"I will say nothing to cause sorrow and shame to those who love him, for there are some that do."

"You have a big heart, Seldon, and I am glad of the day that I met you, for I owe life, everything to you."

"I am glad to have served you, Langley, and I hope that as pards we can enrich each other, for I am sure my

find will pan out rich for all interested in it; but to-morrow will tell."

The next morning the gold-hunter started alone upon his trail of fortune, leaving Lucas Langley to follow with the camp outfit.

The same confidence that he would win, in his due with Black Heart Bill, filled the breast of Andrew Seldon as regarded his finding the gold mine of the man whose name he had taken.

He set out early from camp, having decided to go mounted, that his pard might the more readily follow his trail.

He had studied the map and directions he had found upon the body of the dead man found upon the desert, until he knew them by heart, and he had discovered that the canyon where they were encamped was marked in the drawing of the Grand Canyon.

The latter had been mapped out for several miles on either side, and by a skilled hand beyond all doubt, the drawing being perfect.

The estimated width and depth of the Grand Canyon had been given, its topography, and one spot marked where it read:

"This is the only descent I can find into the canyon, and the trail is narrow, dangerous and long, it being a dozen miles to the river, eight thousand feet below.

"Once in the depths of the canyon and the beauty of the scene is in unison with the grandeur of the view from the mountain heights upon either side.

"There are springs of icy water, trees that must keep their verdure the year round, the river and streams are alive with the finest of fish, game is most abundant, there being mountain sheep, deer, antelope, elk, bear, turkeys, ducks, geese, quail, doves, rabbits and squirrels, while wild peach and plum trees are found, with berries, and the best of soil for raising vegetables.

"In the depths of this marvelous canyon one could dwell undisturbed for centuries, it would seem, would never know want, or have a sorrow, and be at peace with God and man."

At one spot on the map of the canyon was a mark, beneath which was written:

"Here lies my gold mine, which I have staked out and laid claim to, marked the stakes with my name, which I have also painted upon the rocks, with my right and title as finder, and, as I firmly believe, the only man who ever penetrated to the depths of this canyon, this the greatest of Nature's handiwork."

The trail leading from the camp, where Andrew Seldon had found gold, to the one descending into the Grand Canyon, was plainly traced, and where the descent began was written:

"Warning—Let who goes down here, if I be not his guide, remember that it is the Trail of Death, for I lost one horse, that fell over the cliff; but two men, holding a rope on the outside against an animal, to force him hard against the rocks, could pass him down in safety.

"The spots most dangerous are marked with a warning.

"The trail down is twelve miles, perilous every step of the way, and the gold mine three miles up the canyon, at the head of the stream marked in the map."

"The directions are explicit enough; but can it be that I am to find the fortune there that that poor man says, he

who found it and then lay down upon the desert to starve?

"I am a creature of Destiny now, Fate can have nothing more in store for me in the future than I have suffered in the past, and so I shall blindly follow where Destiny leads," and Andrew Seldon rode on at a canter along the rim of the mighty canyon.

At last he came to a spot marked in the map where he must begin the descent to the canyon.

There was a swale there, descending to the rim of the canyon, where there was a large projecting rock, like the mighty prow of a steamer.

Down to this he rode, and by a close survey he found a rough and rocky way around the rock, beneath its towering height, down a shelf-like path along the face of a cliff three thousand feet in height.

None but a sailor, or a man of giant nerve dare make that descent.

But what man had done, man could do, argued the bold gold-hunter, and he said:

"I will do it.

"Wallace Weston is dead to the world, and the real Andrew Seldon died on the desert.

"I am now Andrew Seldon, and what he did, I can do, so down that path I go."

He dismounted, staked his horse out in the motte, wrote a few lines on a slip of paper, telling Lucas Langley when he came up to await his coming there, and then set out on foot down the trail.

Having staked his horse out up the swale, where he could find good grass, Andrew Seldon went around the base of the rock and started down the perilous trail, which the papers and map in his possession designated the Death Trail.

It was a narrow shelf of rock, running along the face of the cliff, gradually descending and not more than four feet wide at its greatest width.

Here and there it went into chasms, then down a steep grade and again among a clump of cedars which had found a footing there.

On walked the gold-hunter, now pausing to gaze down a precipice, a sheer drop of three thousand feet in places.

Through a rocky tunnel he went, then around a jagged, narrow point where the words were painted on the rocks with the red clay found in the vicinity:

"The Death Turn—the worst spot on the trail."

The gold-hunter paused at the very point, leaned against the rock and gazed downward with a coolness that showed perfect control of his nerves.

He stood on a shelf just three feet in width at the point, and with folded arms gazed out over the limitless expanse spread out before him.

He looked up the Grand Canyon for a hundred miles, across to the river on Kaibab Mountain a dozen miles, and down the canyon as far as the eye could reach.

Above, a couple of thousand feet, towered the overhanging cliffs, and beneath his feet he could look down into the canyon six thousand feet.

A loose stone lay on the shelf, and picking it up he dropped it over the edge, watching its flight downward until distance hid it from view.

Down the valley, winding along, and looking like a huge silvery serpent, was the Colorado Grande, a river

at that point two thousand feet in width, yet looking as though a deer in full flight could leap it.

There were red and blue cliffs of stone, pink and gray cliffs, forests of heavy timber, mountains and valleys, rugged peaks, plains and hills, all within the mighty chasm known as the Grand Canyon, and, spellbound, the soldier stood gazing upon the scene before him for an hour and more.

At last he mused aloud:

"Oh! how small man is, how infinitely nothing in this vast scene of nature.

"Well, I must not stand longer here, though I could gaze for hours and never tire.

"I need go no further, for this warning says this is the worst spot on the trail; but we can carry a horse around it where two of us can help him.

"It must be done," and shouldering his rifle Andrew Seldon returned slowly up the trail again.

The sun was near its setting when he reached the swale where he had left his horse.


A glance showed him that his pard had arrived, for the other horses were staked out, and a fire had been built in the edge of some cedars and Lucas Langley was preparing supper, having killed some game on his way over.

He greeted his companion's coming with a shout and said:

"I am glad to see you back again, for do you know I began to feel really nervous in being here in the midst of so sublime a spectacle as is before us, and I feared for your safety."

"Oh, no, I am all right; but I can appreciate what your feelings are, pard, and yet to-morrow I will show you scenes that dwarf the one before us. Now, let me ask you how your head stands a high place, or does it make you dizzy to look down from great heights?"

"Not in the least, for I was once a midshipman in the navy."

"I am glad of this, for we pass  as to-morrow in our descent to the canyon, that will try the nerviest man."

"I can stand it, if it is no more than looking over a precipice," was the answer, and supper being ready, they sat down and ate it.

Turning into their blankets at an early hour, they were up and ready for the start at dawn, and the perilous descent was begun.

The three horses were placed in single file, but not tied together, and Andrew Seldon passed a stout lariat along the outer side, held to the horns of the saddles by a piece of string only.

Then he led the way around the rock, holding one end of the lariat, the horses faithfully following, while Lucas Langley, with the other end held firmly in his grasp, walked behind.

The rope was held taut by the two men, and the leader walked slowly, allowing the horses to pick their steps.

Now and then there was a stumble, then a moment of painful suspense, as a horse half hesitated, but the trap-pings had all been packed on the outer side of the saddles, allowing the animals to scrape as close as possible to the cliffs.

At last the most dangerous point was reached, the turn around the rugged rock, and here one horse was taken

at a time, Langley coming forward and the two men using the rope to hold the animal hard against the cliff.

One horse passed in safety, and the two men breathed more freely.

A second one was also guided by, though he missed going over by the merest accident.

The third had also a narrow escape, one hind foot slipping, but by a miracle he recovered himself.

Then the three horses were left in comparative safety beyond, and the two men stood regarding each other with looks of thankfulness.

Both were pale, and Lucas Langley slightly unnerved, for he had not yet fully recovered his strength.

"You have passed over before, Pard Seldon, but it is new to me, and you are the only leader I would have followed around that cliff.

"It is worth a fortune indeed to take the risk."

Andrew Seldon made no comment upon the remark that he had passed there before, knowing that his comrade believed that he was going to a mine which he had discovered, and which he wished him to believe.

But in response he said:

"You will find the game more than worth the risk," I think.

"Now let us go on."

Down the Trail of Death they slowly went, for the danger was by no means over until the depths of the canyon were reached.

It was late in the afternoon when they arrived at the end of the cliff trail, and remembering his instructions in the papers and in the map, Andrew Seldon led the way up the canyon.

Above them wound, miles high they seemed, the cliffs of the canyon on both sides of the river.

A balmy breeze was blowing down the cliff-banked valley, the roar of the river dashing over a rapid was heard, birds sung in the trees, peach trees and plum trees were there, laden with fruit, and a more weirdly beautiful scene could not be imagined.

Quail ran ahead of them on the trail, a herd of deer bounded away at their approach, a mountain sheep stood far up on the rocks overhead, gazing down upon them in wonder, while a large mountain lion was seen gliding among the cedars, and Savage had to be called back sternly, for he sought a combat with him.

The shadows were deepening then, for the sun was behind Kaibab Mountain, and all nature seemed to invite them to rest in the new-found depths of the Grand Canyon.

After a ride of several miles, for they had mounted their horses after reaching the canyon, the eyes of the fugitive sergeant rested upon a name on the cliffs.

What he saw was:

"ANDREW SELDON'S CLAIM.

"Found and staked Paradise Gold Mine

Oct. 1st, 18—"

"I have found it," he muttered to himself, while his face shone with triumph.

Lucas Langley was of the opinion that his companion was the owner and finder of the mine.

As he gazed upon the grand and inviting view, he did not notice that Andrew Seldon's eyes were not taking in

the surroundings, but were roving about the immediate situation.

He was looking for the cabin of the miner which was marked on the map, the brook and pasturage for the horses, so as not to show ignorance of the scene.

At last he spied the cabin, built of logs and nestling away in a protected nook among the cedars.

The brook, clear as crystal, bubbled along a few paces from the door, and just beyond was a rocky gateway, where there was a canyon of a hundred acres in size, well watered, wooded, and with only the narrow entrance for egress and ingress.

There was a barrier at the entrance, built of logs, so that the horses could have ample freedom to roam, and the grass was long, juicy and of the very best variety for grazing.

Having taken in the situation of the camp, while his comrade was lost in admiration of the scenery, Andrew Seldon said:

"Come, pard, we'll have ample time to see this scenery, and night is not far off.

"Let us get to work, and I'll open up the cabin while you lead the horses up to the canyon yonder and turn them loose, only shut the barrier so they cannot stray."

Lucas Langley at once unsaddled the horses, leaving saddles and packs at the cabin, the door of which was chained and fastened with a padlock.

But Seldon took a key from his pocket, one he had found on the miner's body, and soon opened it.

The cabin was some twelve feet by ten, stoutly built, with a cave in the cliff, against which it was built, serving as a fireplace, the smoke coming out several hundred feet above among the rocks.

There was one bunk in it, a table of small saplings put together, instead of boards, the door being similarly made.

There was a chair made also of slender poles, and in the fireplace a few cooking utensils.

This comprised all the furniture in the cabin, save a few blankets, a heavy double-barreled shotgun, some fishing tackle and a pair of rubber boots.

"How long ago did you discover this paradise, pard?" asked Lucas Langley, returning from having put the horses in the canyon.

"It was discovered just about a year ago."

"And you dared venture down here alone, into a canyon the very immensity of which is appalling?"

"Nothing venture, nothing gain, you know, pard," was the evasive response.

"That is true," and Lucas Langley went out and fetched in an armful of wood, which was already cut and piled up outside.

A bright fire was soon blazing in the natural chimney, the cabin looked cheerful, and the two men unpacked their traps and put them where they would be handy when needed.

While Lucas Langley prepared supper, Andrew Seldon went to work with a hatchet and nails found there and soon had another bunk built.

Savage sat upon his haunches enjoying the scene with evident satisfaction, while he watched with hungry eyes the broiling venison steaks upon the coals.

With evident relish, the two comrades sat down to their first meal in their new home.

The shadows had deepened in the canyon, when they

had finished supper and stepped outside, and, though all was aglow on the clifftops, with the last rays of the setting sun, down on the river all was black, so dense were the shades in those depths.

They stood looking about them, watching the sunlight die, until night settled over all, and the stars shone above with a brightness the men had never seen before.

From the canyons came the howling of wolves and the fretful cry of the panther, while the owls, disturbed by human presence near their retreats, hooted most dismally.

Walking up into the canyon, where the horses were, they found the animals standing huddled together against the barrier, in evident alarm of the wild beasts, and greeting them with welcome neighs showed how glad they were to have their masters near.

"We must stake them out near the cabin at night, pard," said Andrew Seldon.

"Yes, and Savage will be near to guard them."

So the horses were led down to a grassy plot near the cabin, and Savage was left on duty as guard.

Before going into the cabin to retire, Seldon fired several shots, and every cliff took up the echo until it sounded like a mighty battle in progress.

It was long before the last echo died away, and the two gold-hunters went to bed deeply impressed with their grand, weird, in truth, their appalling surroundings.

Leaving his comrade still sleeping, with the first streak of dawn Andrew Seldon crept out of the cabin, the door having been left open during the night.

There had been no disturbance while they slept, save an occasional loud-mouthed bark from Savage, the shots having put a quietus upon the howling of the wolves and the cries of the panthers.

The horses were just rising from the ground to eat their breakfast, and Savage greeted the coming of his new master with evident delight.

The clifftops, over eight thousand feet above the level of the valley, were brightening under the rays of the rising sun, and the shadows in the canyons were growing lighter in here.

Passing up the canyon, Andrew Seldon paused under a lofty cliff, from whence flowed a dozen tiny springs, and stood gazing at the map he had in his hand.

Going close up to the rocks, it took him but a few moments to discover that there was gold cropping out in many places, and there were indications that the base of the cliff had been worked with pick and shovel, and after an hour's search he muttered:

"It is found!

"Yes, poor Andrew Seldon was right, he had a fortune in gold in this canyon.

"Even worked as we two can work it, we have riches here far beyond our needs.

"With a fortune in his grasp, he laid down and died of starvation in the desert; and, sentenced to death, I live to reap the benefit.

"Such is life, so goes the world.

"In his little buckskin pouches he carried several thousands of dollars in gold, and I possess it now; but will do my duty by those whom he mentions in his letters.

"I am Andrew Seldon now, for Wallace Weston is dead, and so even Lucas Langley, my faithful friend, and all others, must believe me.

"I will hunt up the *cache* of provisions to-day, and then

we will be fixed until late in the fall, when I will go to Wingate and get what we need for the winter, for we can work here during the cold weather, as snow will not reach us down here.

"When I go, I will mail two letters, one telling of Hugh Mayhew's death, for that I killed Manton Mayhew will doubtless be already known, and the other letter will be to Andrew Seldon's little daughter, telling her of the fortune in store for her.

"Then it will remain for me to secure this fortune, dig this yellow gold from the mines, and in time become a rich man, so that I can enjoy life far from the scenes that I knew in boyhood, away from those that have hunted me down through life, for, as Andrew Seldon, I can live in peace, and Wallace Weston is dead."

So musing, the gold-hunter turned back toward the cabin, halted after a few paces, glanced at the map he carried, and then turned short off to the right.

Climbing some fifty feet up the steep side of a cliff, he came to a hole in the rocks, a small cave, and in this was found, wrapped closely in canvas, provisions of various kinds, ammunition, an ax, saw, hatchet, pick, spade and shovel, rope, some matches and blankets and cooking utensils, all new, and placed there for future use, should his cabin be discovered by any chance and destroyed and robbed.

"This is, indeed, a good find," muttered the gold-hunter as he descended the cliff and returned to the cabin, where he found Lucas Langley busy preparing breakfast.

"Well, pard, the things in the *cache* are all right, and just what we need.

"I put the horses in the canyon, and then took a look at the mine, and we will find good picking there, gold enough to make us rich men."

"Well, I am glad to hear it, though it seems that I could pass my days in this spot as a poor man, and never tire of it.

"See, I threw in my line twice, and caught those fine fish, and we have a mess of peaches, as well; this place is, indeed, a paradise," and Lucas Langley waxed eloquent over their new home in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

After breakfast was over, with picks and shovels, they went to the mine beneath the cliff, and an hour's work convinced them that they would have a long year's work to get only the gold grains that were cropped out in abundance.

"Now, pard, we will take a ride around the canyons near our ranch to-day, and rest to-morrow, as it will be Sunday, and begin work on Monday.

"What do you say?"

"Just as you do, for the gold is found, our quarters are perfect, game and fish can be procured in abundance, and this is an ideal spot in which to dwell.

"Yes, Pard Seldon, I am happy here, and bless the day when you found Paradise Mine, while I am more than thankful that you allow me to share it with you, a debt I can never repay you, while I already owe you my life."

"Do not speak of it, Langley, or refer to the past, for we live in the present now, and hope for the future," was the response of Andrew Seldon, who was happy himself at being able to hide from the world, no longer feeling that he was a hunted man.

CHAPTER IX.

DR. DICK.

Not very far from where the town of Flagstaff, Arizona, is now located, there was, at the time I write, a mining camp, known as Last Chance Claim.

A party of prospectors had hit upon gold in the canyon they were passing through, after they had given up all hope and were returning home to keep from starving.

The result was that each man staked out a claim, the camp was christened Last Chance Claim, and, while one-half the party remained to dig for gold, the other half set off for the nearest post where they could get provisions and tools, and spread the glad tidings that they had struck it rich.

A wagon train of miners at once set out for the promised land, and along with it went a storekeeper, blacksmith and a landlord to open a hotel, with several saloon-keepers, all of which gave a solidity to the new camp that at once brought it into such prominence that the stage line put on a semi-monthly coach to and from Last Chance Claim, which at once began to more than pay expenses.

Like many of the mining "cities" of the wild West, Last Chance was of mushroom growth, springing up within a few months into a population of several hundred souls, not one of which was a female, and numbering a hundred log cabins, one hotel, so called because the landlord said it was and hung out his sign stating that it was the "Last Chance Hotel," as, indeed, it was, the last chance on earth to get anything to eat in that vicinity.

Then there was a blacksmith shop, stage office and stable and half a dozen saloons, where whisky, taken "straight," and out of a tincup, was the popular, yes, and the only, beverage.

The cabins were scattered about, for several miles from the center of the camp gold-digging was brisk, money plentiful and all was going well in Last Chance, when one day the stage coach came in with a new driver on the box.

The old driver was there, but he lay back upon the top of the coach, with a bullet through his heart, and there were two passengers dead in the stage.

The six horses had dashed up to the halting-place before the Last Chance Hotel, the reins held in a master hand, and at the rear of the coach, in lead, were two fine black horses, one equipped with a gold-mounted saddle and bridle, the other carrying a heavy pack.

The eyes of all were upon the strange driver, as he drew rein, tossed the reins upon the backs of the wheelers like one who knew what to do, and leaped nimbly to the ground.

"Who is he?" asked scores of men, for it was Sunday, and, though a day of rest from working, it was a day of sport in the camps.

The stranger was dressed in gray corduroy pants, stuck in top boots, the heels of which were ornamented with a pair of spurs, representing an eagle's head and wings, a dark blue velvet sack coat, a white silk shirt, with wide collar and black silk scarf, in which shone a brilliant diamond, and a wide-brimmed black sombrero, around which was a gold chain in place of a cord.

There was a handsome gold buckle upon his belt, and a suspicion that it contained revolvers, but they were not visible.

"Who is the boss here, gentlemen?" he said, in a courteous way, as he faced the crowd.

"I am stage agent and landlord of this hotel, sir," was the reply of an individual who stepped forward and confronted the stranger, and who was known as "Landlord Larry."

"Let me explain, sir, in a few words.

"My name is Dr. Dick, and I was on my way to Last Chance to hang up my shingle as a physician and surgeon, and gamble with all who wished to get on a card, when I heard firing on the trail ahead, and rode rapidly forward to see what it meant.

"This coach had passed me half an hour before, with a driver on the box and two passengers inside, and when I came up I discovered that it had been held up by road-agents.

"They had killed the driver and passengers and were robbing the coach when I appeared and opened fire upon them.

"I was only able to get in a couple of shots—there lie the results under that canvas on the top of the coach.

"The others scattered, several in number, and I hitched my horses behind, put the passengers in the coach, tossed the road-agents' bodies on top, and drove on to your camp.

"An examination of your way bills will show whether they got anything of value.

"That is the story, gentlemen, as it happened."

The speaker had a face that commanded admiration in its perfection of feature.

It was darkly bronzed from exposure, clean shaven, and his expression winning, for his smile revealed a row of perfectly-shaped, milk-white teeth, and his eyes were large, black and expressive, while his hair, wavy and glossy, hung down below his shoulders.

He had spoken in a way that carried conviction with his words that he was telling the truth, and all were startled when suddenly a voice in the crowd said, in a loud, angry tone:

"Them as wants ter kin believe thet lie, but I believe you did the killin' and robbin' yerself, durned ef I don't say so, and my name are Boomerang Bob, at yer sarvice, stranger, any time."

Every eye in the now large crowd of miners, that had hastened to the spot upon the arrival of the coach, turned upon the man who had cast the lie into the teeth of the handsome stranger who had called himself Dr. Dick.

All knew him as Boomerang Bob, so named from the fact that, no matter who got the best of him in a fight or a game, he was wont in the end to turn out victor, to "come back at them with both feet," as he expressed it.

Boomerang Bob was a man of giant stature, with long, red hair and beard, a darkly-bronzed face, and he dressed in red woolen shirt, black pants, slouch hat, top boots and a belt, in which there were two revolvers on each hip and a bowie-knife in a scabbard suspended around his neck to a necklace of bear claws.

Boomerang Bob was an ugly customer to rouse, and from the day he had come into the mines he had ruled the miners with a rod of iron, for he celebrated his arrival by killing two men, which at once made him solid with the toughs and dreaded by the better class of men, who were there to work hard for what they earned.

Since that day he had shot a negro, a Chinese and an Indian, while, upon the principle of dog eat dog, he had killed the desperado who had run the town up to his coming.

With such a record, the crowd at once looked for Boomerang Bob to kill Dr. Dick, and, as a doctor was just what was needed in Last Chance, they regretted that it would be the case.

But Dr. Dick simply cast an eye over among the crowd, and picked out the man who had insulted him.

His face did not change color, even, and he said, in the calmest manner possible:

"Step out from the shelter of the crowd, and make your charge against me, my fine fellow."

Whether Boomerang Bob intended to step out or not, the crowd had no desire to shelter him at the risk of catching a bullet by accident, and they broke upon either side of the desperado with a unanimity of purpose that at once left the man standing alone.

There was something in the cool manner of the stranger that caused Boomerang Bob to be caught off his guard, for he slowly put his hand upon his revolver, and growled out:

"Well, I says it ag'in, and what is you goin' ter do about it, Velvet?"

Just how quick a revolver could be drawn had been a subject of much discussion and numerous bets in Last Chance; but all who saw the doctor draw would have wagered high that a weapon had never before been taken from its holster and leveled in so short a space of time.

It did not seem to be half a second that it took, and they heard the words, coolly uttered:

"Well, I am waiting for you to repeat your insulting words!"

Boomerang Bob was fairly caught at a disadvantage, for his hand rested upon his revolver, but the weapon had not been drawn from its holster.

"Yer has got ther dead drop on me," growled the desperado.

"I do not wish to kill you, or I would send a bullet through your brain; but you insulted me, and I shall not let you go without punishment.

"Hands up, and, if one holds a revolver, the bullet goes through your heart!"

There was no mistaking the words or look now of the stranger, and Boomerang Bob had been trained in a school to obey when the odds were against him, and hoped to even up in the future.

So he quickly threw his hands above his head, amid a deathlike silence.

"Turn the palms this way, sir!"

"What for?"

"Because I order it!"

"Obey!"

The desperado obeyed, and then came the question:

"Have you any choice among your fingers?"

"What does yer mean?"

"I mean to clip one of them off at the second joint with my bullet—which shall it be?"

"Pards, does yer intend ter let me be murdered?" shouted the bully; but he did not lower his hands—he knew better.

"Your pards are not in this game.

"You challenged me to play it with you, and now, when I hold trumps, you whine like a cowardly cur.

"Quick! name your finger, or my bullet takes your right hand off!"

"The little finger o' my left hand," yelled Boomerang Bob, excitedly, and, hardly had the words left his lips, when there came a flash and report, a shriek of pain, and the small finger of the bully's left hand was cut off clean at the second joint.

A wild yell went up from the crowd, in admiration of the splendid marksmanship of the stranger, and the sympathy, except among a few, was with the man who had shown that he could resent an insult, in a crowd where he had everything to fear, as he was unknown to all present.

The tiger was quickly tamed, for he still stood with upraised hands, down one of which a crimson stream was trickling.

Having administered his punishment, resented the insult offered him, the stranger stepped up quickly to the desperado, and, extending his hand, said:

"I have no hard feelings now, pard, so shake."

The hands were lowered, and one grasped that of the stranger, who continued:

"As I said, I am a surgeon and physician, and I will at once dress the remnant of that little finger, and in a couple of months you will not miss it.

"Come, my instruments are in my pack, and I'll get them."

He stepped to his pack-horse, quickly slipped out a leather case containing surgical instruments, lint and medicines, and, calling for a basin of water, bathed the wounded hand skillfully, and, binding it up, took a silk handkerchief from his pocket and made a sling for the desperado to carry his hand in.

"What's yer bill?" growled Boomerang Bob, when the work was done.

"We'll call it square, as it is my first call in Last Chance, and I wish you to come to me each day to have it dressed.

"Now, landlord, how can you fix me?"

"There's a cabin separate over there on the hill, sir, just built, and it has two rooms, and is very comfortable, while you can take your grub at the hotel."

"That just suits me; but my horses?"

"They kin be stabled in the stage sheds."

"Good! Will you go with me to my quarters?"

"Yes, as soon as you have told me more about this attack on the coach."

"I have told you all I know.

"Do you recognize the passengers or road-agents?" and the doctor turned to the dead bodies, which had been taken from the coach and placed in a row.

"We knows them two as a bad lot, and we suspected 'em of being crooked," and he pointed to the road-agents.

"The passengers is strangers, but Bud Benton, the driver, we all knew and liked, and a squarer, better man never held the ribbons over the backs of six horses.

"Pards, we must see that poor Budd Benton is avenged."

A yell of affirmation answered this remark of Landlord Larry, and Dr. Dick said:

"That is right, gentlemen; outlawry should be put down in this country.

"But, landlord, have you discovered if the road-agents got away with much booty?"

"Yes, they got a package of paper money the men sent gold dust in to be exchanged for, as more handy of use, and there was ten thousand dollars lost, while these passengers were robbed of money and jewelry, I guess, as they look as though they might have been well fixed.

"But when was this hold-up, stranger?"

"Dr. Dick is my name, landlord, and I hope not to be a stranger any more to Last Chance; but, to answer your question, let me say that I am unacquainted with your country here, and was simply following the stage trail, so think it was about five miles back, where there is a stream to cross."

"Yes, Red Run we calls it, for there have been deadly doings going on there before."

"Well, if you send back on the trail, you may learn more, for the horses of the two dead road-agents are there, as I did not stop to bring them along."

"You was right; boys, get a gang together and go to Red Run, and see if you can get on the trail of them outlaws."

"Now, doctor, we'll go over to your cabin."

Landlord Larry led the way to the cabin, a couple of hundred yards away, and pleasantly situated.

It had just been built, and had in it a cot bed, a table and couple of chairs, as much furniture as could be allowed in Last Chance.

"This is all right, and I'll soon have all comfortable, with the things I carry in my pack," said Dr. Dick.

The horses were unsaddled and led away, and, opening the large pack, the doctor unrolled some panther, bear and buffalo skins, Indian tanned, a number of redskin souvenirs, boxing-gloves, foils and masks, a bundle of well-packed clothes, with hats, boots, and several gold-mounted revolvers and a repeating rifle.

He also had a handsome dressing-case, gold-mounted, with razors, mug, and all the necessary articles for toilet use.

It did not take him long to make his rooms look quite cosy, and Landlord Larry made the effort of his life to please him after he saw how he traveled in the wild West, and told him he did not care what price he paid for board.

The result was that sheets were found for the cot, another table, an easy-chair, a basin and pitcher, and Dr. Dick expressed himself as more than satisfied.

As it was Sunday, he concluded to "dress up" for dinner, and when he appeared at the hotel the miners were paralyzed to see him dressed in white corduroy pants, black velvet coat, the buttons of which were twenty-dollar gold-pieces, and a Mexican sombrero fringed with gold dollars, while the band was of a golden cord, representing a snake, and having diamond eyes.

About his waist was a belt, in which were two gold-mounted revolvers, and his whole make-up was gorgeous in the extreme, striking with admiration the miners who beheld him, and causing one to at once call out:

"Three cheers for the gold king!"

The cheers were given with a will, and Dr. Dick was thus christened "The Gold King of Last Chance."

CHAPTER X.

BUFFALO BILL APPEARS.

Dr. Dick was not long in making himself a decided character of Last Chance Claim, even when to be otherwise was the exception.

The party that had gone out to the scene of the hold-up of the coach had returned, with the horses of the two dead road-agents, and told of evidence seen there of there having been a hot fight.

The coach, in fact, bore testimony to this, in the bullet marks upon it, but no trace whatever of how the road-agents had come to the scene and departed could be found.

Bud Benton, the driver, was a popular man in Last Chance, and a brave one, and men spoke of avenging him.

The road-agents were given quick burial in the camp burying-ground, which was very well filled for so new a place as was Last Chance, especially when the place was very healthy, and "sudden death" was the cause of most of the taking off of the people.

For a man to die with his boots on in that camp was of more frequent occurrence than to fall a victim to disease.

Bud Benton and the two passengers were given what the miners called "a dandy send-off," for the camps turned out in force, a hundred voices sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee," as they marched to the grave, over three hundred strong.

The "ceremony" at the grave consisted in singing and a few comments by the miners, who wished to say something in farewell to Bud Benton and try and palliate his offenses by telling the Lord that he was "O. K. and a squar' man all round, so don't be hard on him when he gits ter glory."

The doctor attended the funeral, and was quite as much an attraction as the corpses.

His "git-up" was immense, and he looked like a man who was out of place in that rough camp.

But he had chosen to come to Last Chance to live, and he had certainly come in with all in his favor, having brought the coach in, with two of the outlaws whom he had killed.

His summary punishment of Boomerang Bob had won the admiration of the miners, for they saw that he was a dead shot, and had nerve as well.

The doctor's first night in camp proved without adventure, and when morning came the miners saw that he had hung out a sign, or, rather, nailed one upon his cabin:

"DR. DICK,

Physician, Surgeon and Sport."

There were those who predicted that some day there would be trouble between Boomerang Bob and the doctor, for the former was no man to drop a quarrel once begun.

In fact, Boomerang Bob's strong point was in coming back at one whom he disliked, or who had done him an injury.

He was very quiet about his having been punished by the doctor, but this rather meant trouble ahead.

Still, he went to Dr. Dick's office the next day and got him to dress his wounded hand, as he had promised him he would do.

He was more polite than was his wont, but had little to say, and, after thanking the doctor, said he would call again in the morning.

"Do so, for I am a little afraid you are going to have an ugly hand of that; but I can tell in a day or two better. If it turns out bad, I'll amputate it for you with pleasure."

Boomerang Bob did not know just how to take this, whether it was sarcasm or kindness; but he gave the doctor the benefit of the doubt.

That day Dr. Dick had several professional calls, two from wounds and half a dozen from sickness.

He went promptly, did just what was right, and left a good record behind him.

After supper he went to the largest gambling den in the camps, accompanied by Landlord Larry, and, after going the rounds of the tables, sat down and played a game with several who prided themselves upon their "smartness" as gamblers.

All who watched the game decided that the doctor handled the cards like an expert, and saw him walk off with several hundred dollars he had won, and this gained for him another sobriquet of the "Doctor Sport."

The stage had gone out on time, under another driver, after his fatal adventure in coming in, and so the rumor had gone along the line of posts and camps of the hold-up and death of the passengers, not to speak of the robbery by the outlaws of a large sum of money.

The report had been made to Fort Wingate by Landlord Larry, and the result was that when the coach came in again there was a guard of two soldiers upon it.

But, as no road-agents were seen on the run, they were taken off on the next trip, and the coach came in without a guard.

But soon after its arrival a horseman rode up to the Last Chance Hotel, whose coming and appearance created considerable commotion in the camps, for at once from lip to lip spread the news:

"Buffalo Bill, the chief of scouts, has come to Last Chance."

This information was followed by the question, which no one seemed able to answer:

"What is he here for?"

CHAPTER XI.

ON SPECIAL SERVICE.

The days passed away at Fort Faraway, after the escape from execution of Sergeant Wallace Weston, yet the fugitive soldier, who had met so sad a fate upon the desert, as was believed, was still the topic of conversation.

There was a mystery hanging about the man which none could fathom, and, up to the time he had taken the life of a brother sergeant, Manton Mayhew, there never had been one word or report against him.

The wives of the officers who saw him were all agreed that the sergeant was a gentleman born, and they wove about his life some hidden romance that must remain a mystery.

Of course, his death was officially reported in a few words, that he had daringly escaped execution, had fled into the desert without water or food, and several days after Buffalo Bill had guided Lieutenant Tompkins and a squad of cavalry to where the dead body of the sergeant had been found, half devoured by wolves, his horse lying by his side, and also furnishing a feast for coyotes.

The body had been buried where found, and a huge rock rolled over the grave.

If there was a single person who doubted that Sergeant Weston had not met his fate, he, or she, kept it a secret, and he was remembered only as dead.

That he had suffered far more, in starving upon the desert, than he would through an execution, all felt certain, and he had their sympathy, for, somehow, they felt that he had kept back testimony at the trial which, if it did not clear him, would, at least, palliate his crime.

He was missed from the fort sadly, for, a fine musician, he had often given enjoyment by singing to his comrades in a tenor voice that many said would have been his fortune had he gone upon the operatic stage.

Why a man that was educated, who was known to speak several languages fluently, who could sketch and paint, and was really very accomplished, should have enlisted in the army as a private when there were virtually other fields open to him in which to make a handsome living, none could understand, and therein lay the romance of his life.

He had quickly risen to a sergeant's position, and it was believed would be eventually recommended for an officer's rank; but suddenly came his downfall, his killing of a brother sergeant, his trial, sentence, escape and supposed death.

Thus matters stood at Faraway, when one day Major Randall sent for Buffalo Bill, who had just brought dispatches in from Fort Wingate.

"Cody, sit down, for I wish to have a talk with you," said the major, and the scout obeyed.

"You made remarkably good time through with these dispatches.

"Was there need for it?"

"No more, sir, than the rumors I heard at Wingate, that the Indians were in an ugly mood, and that road-agents were taking to the Overland Trail again, and had held up a coach on the new run to Last Chance, Major Randall."

"That is just it, Cody; the road-agents have been up to more deviltry, my dispatches say, and I am ordered to look after the outlaws, with a force from this end of the line."

"A force will do little good, sir, for at sight of the soldiers the road-agents play the prairie-dog act, that is, hunt their holes, and you look in vain for them."

"That is my idea; but still, I must move in the matter, and at once, and hence I sent for you."

"Anything I can do, sir, command me."

"I know that you are willing enough, but I dislike to send you upon a trip that is so full of deathly peril."

"Don't mind that, sir, for it is our duty to carry life in our hands out here."

"Well, it seems the semi-monthly coach to Last Chance,

that new mining camp which is growing so, and where the miners are striking it rich, I learn, was held up, not many miles from the end of its run, by road-agents.

"The driver, Bud Benton, was killed, as also two of the passengers, and they were all robbed.

"The driver reported to the colonel, upon the run back, that the coach was brought in by some daring fellow, who killed two of the road-agents and drove the others off.

"He brought it on the top of the coach the two outlaws he had killed, and the bodies of the others, and thus established a name for himself in Last Chance as a hero."

"He was a plucky fellow, sir, to attack odds as he did."

"He was, indeed; but, Cody, my wish is to get at the haunts of these outlaws, to know if any of them are of the desperado element from Last Chance, and find out just what can be done in the matter, so I desire you to take what scouts you need from your band, and go on this special mission for me."

"I will go at once, major, and alone, for I can do better detective work without any men, and it amounts to that."

"I leave that with you, Cody."

The scout rose, and said:

"I will be ready to start, sir, within two hours, and report for further instructions."

An hour after, he rode away on his mission.

Landlord Larry knew Buffalo Bill, for he had met him several times before, and he was proud to have the famous scout as a guest at his hotel.

He gave him the best room he had, ordered a special supper for him, and said:

"I wish to make you acquainted with the dandy man of our camp, Mr. Cody."

"Who is he, Larry?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Well, that I can't tell you, any more than that his name is Dr. Dick, or that's what he calls himself."

"Well, and who is Dr. Dick?"

"A dandy from 'wayback, for he's the man who stamped the road-agents when they killed poor Bud Benton and his passengers, and got the boodle from 'em."

"Yes, I heard the coach had been held up on the trail; but, could you find out nothing about the outlaws?"

"Not a photograph of them, though the boys spent a couple of days on the track.

"If you had been here, you might have trailed 'em; but, it's a shame to have a coach held up like that was, and it'll give a black eye to the prosperity of Last Chance."

"Hardly, Larry, so long as the gold in the canyon holds out, for people will take chances every day with death to get rich, and, from all accounts, your mines here are paying well."

"The very best; but will you go over and call on the Doc?"

"Oh, yes, if you wish it."

"I does."

"See here, Larry, can you keep your tongue between your teeth?"

"You bet I kin."

"It is to your interest to do so, and it will be worse for you to chatter."

"I hain't no old maid, Bill."

"Some men are worse gossips than a dozen old maids and a parrot; but I believe you will keep a secret."

"Try me, Bill."

"Well, I am here on a special mission."

"Gold-hunting?"

"No, hunting gold-hunters, see?"

"Is some of the miners playing it too strong?"

"I accuse no one; but, there is some one hunting for gold in a careless way, trying to get rich in one haul by holding up a coach, and using a bullet instead of a pick."

"I'm catching on."

"I am here to find out just where these outlaws are, and you can help me."

"I'll do it."

"Now, that I may not be looked upon as a scout detective, a spy, let me tell you that I wish to go in partnership with you in a mine, that is, apparently as a partner, though really not one, for I am poor and could not buy even a small interest in the mine that is making you rich, Larry."

"It's pannin' out big, Bill."

"So I have heard, and you are not losing money with what it makes you happy to call a hotel," and Buffalo Bill smiled as he glanced at the log shanty known as the Last Chance Hotel.

"It hain't no New York palace, Bill, but it goes out here, and it's as big a gold mine in its way as that hole in the hill down the canyon is in its way."

"I do not doubt it, Larry, and if you don't give your guests feather beds and finger-bowls, you feed them well, I know.

"But now to my plan to stay here a few days."

"Go ahead."

"Take me down to see your mine first, and pretend to the miners that I, with several others whom I represent, go in with you in shares, while I am looking about to find a claim or two to buy for officers at the fort, at the same time prospecting for a little lead on my own account."

"I understand."

"This will give me a chance to look about, Larry, and come here now and then without exciting suspicion, while in reality I am on the hunt for outlaws, a detective to ferret out what their game is, and what plays they intend to make."

"I'm with you, Bill, so now let us go down and look over the mine—unless you wish to meet the doctor first?"

"No, I will meet him on my return from the mine; but you have not told me who he is?"

"Dr. Dick."

"His other name?"

"Dunno."

"What does he do?"

"Shoots, practices medicine, gambles and chips in as partner in mines now and then."

"Is he well off?"

"He does a big business in medicine, wins money when he plays cards, has not made any mistake in mine investments, and dresses 'way up, wearing velvet, with gold buttons."

"In fact, his weapons are gold-mounted and he runs so to the yellow metals we calls him here the gold king, and also the doctor sport."

"I wants you to meet him, Bill."

"And I wish to meet him, and will," rejoined the scout.

Landlord Larry ordered two horses brought around, and mounting, he and the scout rode away down the canyon.

There were few in the mining camps of Last Chance who had seen Buffalo Bill, but all had heard of him, and his record was a national one, and every eye, as he passed along, seemingly unconscious that every gaze was upon him, took him in from head to foot, and comments were freely made upon his superb seat in the saddle, his handsome face, and look of daring which his many exploits fully backed up.

"They are onter yer, Bill, and you bet they knows yer, for who don't on this border," said Landlord Larry, pleased with the admiration his friend commanded from all.

The miners greeted them pleasantly, all anxious to see a man about whom they had heard so much as they had of Buffalo Bill.

Only a few had seen him before, but his record in the mines was the common talk around the campfires, and about the frontier assembling places.

The scout spoke pleasantly when addressed by any one, and once or twice, when cheered by a small crowd, raised his hat in response.

At last the first one of Landlord Larry's mines was reached, and the two dismounted to have a look at it.

There were eight or ten men working with picks and shovels in the side of the cliff, picking up now and then the small yellow grains of the precious metal as they dug them out, but all eyes fell upon the landlord and the scout as they arrived and dismounted.

"These are my miners," said Larry with an air of pride, and Buffalo Bill answered:

"Glad to see you, boys."

But hardly had he uttered the words when his eyes became fixed upon one of the party.

It was a man who had shrunk back at sight of him, and half turned his face away.

Following the gaze of the scout, all glanced toward the man, and each eye noted that he had turned to the hue of death.

"Landlord Larry, there is one man that I recognize, and I am sorry to see that he is in your employ," said Buffalo Bill.

"You mean Reddy, for he has turned white at seeing you, Bill."

"Yes, I mean the man there leaning on his pick, Roger Redfield, a deserter from the army, yes, and more than that."

"It's a lie! I never was in the army," yelled the man.

"There is no need of your denying it, Redfield, for a man masked as you are with red hair and beard, and black eyes cannot hide his identity."

"You are my man."

"I say I am not."

"I'll prove it."

"How?"

"If I am wrong I'll give you a chance to resent it by allowing you to strike me a blow square in the face, as hard as you can."

"Well?"

"If I am right, then you go back with me to the fort."

"How are you going to prove it, Bill?" asked Larry, as he saw that there was an ugly look in the accused miner's eyes.

"If that man is Roger Redfield, he has on his breast a blue anchor in India ink and the initials R. R."

"Come, Redfield, show up."

"My name is not Redfield, and I am not the man he believes me."

"Have you not the mark I speak of on your breast, just here?" and the scout designated the exact spot.

"No, I have not."

"Dare you show your breast?"

"Yes."

"Do so, and I'll give you satisfaction for the insult."

The man hesitated, unbuttoned his woolen shirt and then said:

"I've got a bad scar on my breast, I admit, where I was burnt when a child by falling on a burning log; but I have no brand such as you say, Buffalo Bill."

"How did you know that I was Buffalo Bill, for Landlord Larry did not mention my name?"

The man's face flushed and he replied:

"I just thought so, from what I heard of you."

"Now show your breast, Redfield."

"Yes, Reddy, show up," said Larry.

The man pulled open his shirt and revealed a red scar, as from a burn, and fully three inches square.

"See!"

"Yes, I see that you felt that that brand would some day betray you, and so you burned it off, painful as was the operation."

"Say, pard, that hain't squar' ter Reddy," said a miner.

"Yes, he's showed up and ther brand hain't thar as you said," another remarked.

"Men, I'm not after you, so don't drop in until your time comes.

"I came here on business with Landlord Larry, not on the hunt for this man.

"But I happen to know his record, for he was in the navy and killed a brother sailor and escaped.

"He enlisted in the army, and one afternoon was recognized by a naval officer who visited the fort where he was stationed, and that night, before the charge was made against him, he deserted, carrying with him a large sum of money he robbed his comrades of.

"I am not after blood money, for there is a reward for his arrest, offered by the soldiers of his regiment, and I will give it to the Soldiers' Home fund; but I have orders to arrest that man wherever I find him, and I intend to do it now that I have found him."

The words of Buffalo Bill caused the accused man and his comrades to move about uneasily and assume an anxious look, seeing which Landlord Larry said:

"But, Bill, you have not proved that this is the man."

"Haven't I?"

"We'll see if I have not, Larry.

"In the first place, Redfield was a man of the size of that one, and had red hair and beard, with intensely black eyes."

"Yes."

"Then he had the brand on his breast that I speak of."

"But this man has not."

"Has he not a burn there where the brand was burnt off."

"Well, it might be as he says."

"Then why did he leave down on the lower edge the bottom part of the two letters, 'R. R.'—see, there is over a quarter of an inch of the lower part of the letters, which he failed to burn off, and had not the courage to repeat the dose of burning, when he saw his mistake."

"It isn't so," shouted the accused.

"Let us see, Reddy," and Landlord Larry stepped forward and drew the shirt aside.

"By Jove, you are right, Bill, and have keen eyes to detect that; but there is the blue India ink sure enough, and the signs of two letters—'R's.'"

"I say no," yelled the accused man again, and his face grew blacker and blacker with rage.

"Well, Redfield, for the sake of argument, we will drop the brand on your breast, and I'll prove it in another way."

"How can you?"

"I saw you in swimming at the fort once, and I noticed that the small toe of your left foot was missing."

"It hain't."

"If I am wrong I'll give you a shot at me ten paces off, and if I am right you go back to the fort with me when I go."

"That's squar', Reddy," said a miner.

"I'll not show up," growled the man accused.

"Won't you! Off with that left boot, or I'll send a bullet through your brain."

The action of the scout was so unexpected, his movement so quick in leveling his revolver, which was drawn from its holster like a flash, that Reddy was taken completely by surprise.

He turned livid once more, while, with a quick glance at the restless miners, Buffalo Bill said:

"See here, men, I will stand no interference in the discharge of my duty, so be careful, for I have my eyes on you, too."

This quieted an evident show of resistance, and the scout repeated:

"Off with your left boot, Redfield, or I'll carry out my threat."

"Sit down, Reddy," and the landlord stepped forward to take off the boot.

But the miner stepped back and said:

"See here, pards, that accursed scout has got me down fine, for I has got a toe missing; but it's only a queer accident, and I hain't ther man he says, so don't let him take me, and have me strung up when I hain't guilty.

"Stand by me, pards!"

The acknowledgment of having a toe missing, as Buffalo Bill had said, the burn on his breast, with the parts of the letters showing below, while he had red hair and beard, with jet-black eyes, was convincing proof to Landlord Larry that the scout had made no mistake, that he knew his man.

The other miners, too, were of the same opinion, but, appealed to by their comrade for aid, they decided to help him out of a bad situation.

As if a mental telegraphy had passed between them the seven men who were there as comrades of Reddy at once drew their revolvers and covered Buffalo Bill, while one cried:

"Run for it, Reddy, and git out o' ther way!"

But Buffalo Bill did not change color, did not move

the hand that covered the accused, and said in the coolest manner possible:

"If you stir from that spot I pull trigger, and if I am riddled with the bullets of your comrades, I will kill you."

It was an instant of terrible suspense to all, and Landlord Larry broke the silence, as the men stood there with leveled revolvers, Buffalo Bill covering Reddy, and himself covered by the revolvers of the seven other miners.

"Men, I won't have this row, and you know I am not one to fool with.

"Buffalo Bill is in the discharge of his duty, Reddy is guilty, the man he says he is, and you are interfering with a government officer, remember, so put up yer weapons and don't make fools of yerselves."

The words of Landlord Larry made an impression, but it was at once destroyed by an appeal from Reddy, who called out:

"Stand by me, pards, and don't let Buffalo Bill take me to the fort to be hung!"

The situation was a most threatening one.

The miners were restrained from acting from two reasons.

First, the man they covered with their revolvers was Buffalo Bill, a government scout, a man with a record which would quickly bring the vengeance of his many friends and the army down upon Last Chance, if he was killed there.

They could kill him, yes, for seven revolvers covered him, and the men were good shots that held them, while he was not ten feet from them.

The second consideration was that they all liked their employer, Landlord Larry.

He was Buffalo Bill's friend, and he had sided with him.

Again, not one of them doubted the truth of the scout's charge against the man they knew as Reddy, and whom he had called Roger Redfield.

These were the ends of the two letters, the burn on the breast to prove his charge a true one, and Reddy had confessed to there being the small toe on his left foot missing, which, with the fact that he was so strangely marked with brightened hair and beard, and black eyes, could not help but prove that there was no mistake.

They had also heard him say, too, that he had been a sailor.

He was not an exactly popular man, yet was liked, for he sang a good song, played the guitar, and also told a good story.

Still he was their comrade, and he had pleaded with them to save him.

This they must do, if they could manage it, though each one hesitated at pulling trigger on Buffalo Bill.

"Men, remember, you are turning your muzzles upon

a government officer, though I do not wish to protect myself under that guise.

"You are protecting a murderer, a criminal, a man who deserted from the navy, then from the army, and was a thief as well.

"He even stole a handsome inlaid guitar given him by the colonel's daughter to repair, for he plays that instrument well, and sings.

"He is my man, and I will take him if I have to shed blood to do so."

The mention of the guitar was further proof that Buffalo Bill knew his man.

Not one doubted it now, but they had taken a stand they must maintain, and one of them, acting as leader, asked:

"How is yer goin' ter take him, Buffalo Bill?"

"I will find a way."

"But we has you covered, dead sure, and I says to Reddy ter git."

"And I say that if he moves I'll kill him."

"Then we kill you dead sartin."

"It may be, but I expect to die some day in the discharge of my duty, so it may be that my time has come," was the cool reply of the scout.

This response caused the miners some uneasiness, which was increased when Landlord Larry said:

"Men, Buffalo Bill came here on business with me, for he has bought a share in my mine, and is looking for shares in others for some officers.

"He is my guest, and coming here to prospect, for he knows gold when he sees it, he recognizes a man he has orders to take wherever he finds him.

"You know as well as I do that Reddy is the man Buffalo Bill says he is, and I want you to understand that if the scout kills him, and you fire as you threaten upon a government officer, I know the men who do the work, and they'll be the first in Last Chance before the sun sets.

"Now, you've heard my opinion, so you better take my advice, as I know what is best."

"Don't let him take me, pards, and if he draws trigger on me, avenge me," pleaded Reddy, as he saw that the words of Landlord Larry had their effect upon his companions.

A glance the leader gave at the others, and then at the piteous, pleading face of the accused, and then said:

"We'll stand by you, pard, and don't you forgit it."

"And don't you forget that I will stand by Buffalo Bill," said a stern voice, and Dr. Dick stepped around the corner of a rock and advanced, a revolver in each hand.

"Dr. Dick! the right man in the right place," cried Landlord Larry, while Buffalo Bill had not changed a

muscle, nor moved his hand from a level or taken his eye off the man his revolver covered.

"Pardon me, gentlemen, for breaking in on your little *séance*, but I was riding down the valley, saw that trouble was going on, so dismounted and drew near enough to overhear that it was Buffalo Bill whom you were threatening, and that because he was doing his duty.

"Gentlemen, drop your weapons, or I open fire, and let me give you a hint that I never miss, and I only act to prevent you making fools of yourselves."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCOUT WINS.

The arrival of Dr. Dick put a new phase upon the situation.

He was immensely popular in Last Chance, and a specimen of his shooting had been seen.

When he could have killed Boomerang Bob, he had simply clipped a finger off, and then had doctored him until he got well.

He was a gambler, yet never played with a poor miner, and never took all a rich one had in putting up his money on a game.

He gave his services free to one who had no money, and obeyed a call as quickly for a pauper as one with money.

He was generous, courteous to all, but all knew that he was a dangerous man, and he commanded both their regard and admiration.

Now that he faced the seven miners with a revolver in each hand, standing in an oblique direction from them while they covered Buffalo Bill with their weapons, they saw that they were in as much danger as the scout and the man they sought to befriend.

Each one seemed to feel that Dr. Dick's revolver covered him individually, and they also discovered that Landlord Larry had his weapons drawn.

With three such men as Buffalo Bill, Dr. Dick and Landlord Larry to face, they at once began to weaken.

The leader of the miners felt that he could see the bullet in the doctor's pistol, and he lost no time in calling out:

"Buffalo Bill, you wins ther game, for when ther doctor chips in, I weakens for one."

"Me, too," said several others in chorus, while one remarked:

"We'd like ter stand by yer, Reddy, but it's no use, for ther game is ag'in us, and we don't hold nary a frump."

"I am glad that you think that way, pards, for I do not like to turn my gun upon my friends; but I won't see Buffalo Bill shot down by any man, for he has a clean rec-

ord, and though I never met him before, I admire him for his nerve."

The doctor, from the moment of his arrival, had spoken in the coolest manner possible.

He was not in the slightest degree excited, had looked like one not interested.

But now Buffalo Bill said:

"I thank you, sir, for preventing bloodshed, and I can only explain to you that I recognized this man as a murderer, twice a deserter from the service, and a thief.

"I proved his identity, but he appealed for aid to his comrades, and I hold no ill will against them for responding, for they showed a manly nature in doing so.

"But it is better that this criminal should suffer punishment than that half a dozen brave fellows be shot down in protecting him.

"Again I thank you, sir."

The scout led Reddy away after binding him, and with the help of Landlord Larry and Dr. Dick searched his cabin.

Under the bed and beneath a pile of skins in one corner were found jewelry and money that proved conclusively that Reddy was one of the men who had held up the Last Chance coach.

That night when all the miners were at supper at the hotel, Buffalo Bill started on a lone search through the cabins of the other miners, who had been so anxious to help Reddy in his fight against the scout.

In four of these cabins other booty was found, showing that the inmates were members of Reddy's band.

After supper Buffalo Bill called Landlord Larry and Dr. Dick aside and told them of his discoveries, and later on in the evening the trio paid a visit to each of the four miners, who Buffalo Bill had discovered to be outlaws.

When tackled separately by these men none of them showed fight, and the next morning Buffalo Bill had five prisoners ready to start on the coach for Fort Faraway, and for a long time after that Last Chance was free from robbers and freebooters.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 72, will contain: "Buffalo Bill and the Black Heart Desperado; or, The Wipe-out at Last Chance." Are you anxious to hear more of the history of Wallace Weston, who was supposed to be dead, but who was living as a miner under another name. You will find him taking part in the corking story issued next week. Buffalo Bill returned to Last Chance after a short time, and the wipe-out of desperadoes, conducted there under his auspices, is a thing that the mining town remembers to this day. Don't fail to read about it.



Names of prize-winners on page 31.

Did you win a prize? If so, we congratulate you. If you didn't, look on page 32. It tells all about the new contest there.

It's a corking chance for you—dandy prizes and a tip-top contest.

Overboard from a Rowboat.

(By Elmer P. Noy, Conn.)

Not very long ago I had a very narrow escape from drowning. It took place in the town of Wading River, Long Island.

My sister and myself were spending a few days there. In back of our house was a small lake, but it was quite deep. The people owned boats, and as I was very fond of rowing, I soon learned how.

One morning I was out in the boat as usual, when suddenly the boat upset and I went sprawling into the water.

The water was very deep where I fell in, and as I could not swim, I cried for help.

As soon as my cries were heard, the men folks got another boat and came after me, and I was landed safe on shore.

An Adventure With a Monster Fish.

(By W. B. Newman, Texas.)

Several years ago it was my pleasure to visit Weed Lake, which lies east of Trinity River, in Anderson County. This lake is considered by anglers to be the best fishing resort in Texas, and at all times during the year is crowded with sportsmen.

It was in the spring of '94 when I visited the above lake, with a party of McClelland County nimrods acting in the capacity of guides. We were three days in completing our journey to the lake, which is seventy-two miles east of Fairfield, the home of the writer of this story.

After reaching our destination and preparing camp three of us decided to take a boat ride; so unloosing the boat from its mooring, we began to row out on the lake.

We had not proceeded far when a big commotion was seen in the water just ahead of us. We paid but little attention to the splash, as it is no unusual sight to see a hundred garfish jumping at once, especially when the water is as placid as it was that afternoon.

We were all in a very jocular mood, laughing and talk-

ing; in fact, having a picnic (as the boys express it), when, without warning, our boat was lifted clear out of the water and turned topsy-turvy, spilling us all out into the lake.

Badly frightened and excited we began to swim for the shore. I being a very slow swimmer, was left far behind; in fact, so badly scared I could scarcely swim, looking every moment to fall a prey to the monster that cap-sized the boat. The rest of the boys finally reached terra firma and I was almost in the act, when I was seized by the leg and carried beneath the surface of the lake.

Words cannot portray my feeling when the creature began dragging me to deep water. I then realized my hopeless chance of life. A story my uncle told me years ago flashed through my mind. It was his experience with an alligator. The brute seized him and he forced the alligator to release his hold by jabbing his fingers into his eyes.

I now proceeded to adopt my uncle's tactics, which worked like a charm. I came to the surface more dead than alive, from loss of breath and blood—the latter caused by a terrible gash made by the monster when he seized me.

My companions seeing me floating on the surface of the lake jumped in a boat and came to my rescue. Thus ended my thrilling experience with the monster.

A Sailor's Life; or, Hard Luck.

(By Franklin Donser, Ohio.)

The 17th day of August was the day fixed for the sailing of the ship *Alert*, from Boston round Cape Horn, to the western coast of North America.

She got under way early in the afternoon. I made my appearance on deck in full sea rig for a two-years' voyage.

I joined the crew and we hauled out into the stream. On the following night I stood my first watch.

My watch began at eleven o'clock at night, with orders to call the captain if the wind came up from the westward.

At midnight, having called the captain, I got orders to call all hands. How I accomplished this I do not know, but am quite sure I did not give the true hoarse boatswain call.

"A-a-ll ha-a-nds up, anchor a-ho-oy!"

When out about three days I was seasick, but could not go to bed. The weather was bad and two sailors were laid up already.

I was in my "bunk" half dead, half alive, when I was aroused by the order from the officer:

"Forward there! rig the head!"

I felt tempted to tell him I had rather wait till after breakfast, but I knew I must take the "bull by the horns," so I took my bucket of grease and climbed up to the royal masthead. Here the rocking of the vessel, which increases the higher you go from the deck, and the smell of the grease brought me into a "nice shape." When I was half done with my work my senses left me and I found myself in salt water.

I had fallen from the yard arm. I tried to swim, but my strength was gone and I was about to give up when a rope was cast me from a lifeboat.

I grabbed the rope and when halfway in the "pump." I found there was no time for dreaming and must "turn to" at the first light.

Having called all hands we commenced washing down the deck. After we had finished and coiled up the rigging I sat down on the spars to wait for seven bells, which was the sign of breakfast.

A Snake Story.

(By Gilbert Tutt, Oklahoma.)

One day I went to the Cimaron River to go for a little swim, when suddenly I got a cramp and swam for the shore.

Looking back I saw a bullsnake making for me. I saw I could not make the shore and I was very much frightened. I stopped and caught hold of his tail and cracked his head off as I would a whip. He stung me, but I am all right now. I will never go there again.

A Fight With a Grizzly.

(By L. Roberts, Louisiana.)

In the summer of 1896 I started on a hunt in the mountains, accompanied by my friend and guide, Dan Wilson. When we were going through a thick grove of pines, all at once I heard a sniff to the side of us, and looking up I saw a sight that made my knees shake. Hardly fifty feet distant was a giant grizzly, reared on his hind legs, and coming straight for me.

I quickly raised my rifle and fired under his foreleg, but he was on me in a moment, and I felt his hot breath on my cheek, when a shot from Dan's rifle rang out and he turned and went for him.

He quickly fired twice, but the bear seemed bullet-proof and went on, and in less time than it takes to tell Dan was in his grasp.

I could not fire for fear of hitting Dan, so I drew my long, keen knife and plunged it into him. Twice he turned on me and caught me in his grasp, and I thought every bone in me was broken.

Dan was hurt badly, but he managed to raise his rifle and fire, putting the barrel almost in the monster's ear.

The bear relaxed his hold and we sank down together.

He was dead when I came to, and when we examined him he had five ounces of lead in his carcass.

Dan said that it was a close shave.

I now am the happy possessor of a necklace of bear claws, fully six inches long. I had three ribs broken and Dan was bruised up badly.

That was my last and only adventure with a grizzly.

A Leap for Life.

(By Edward Goforth, N. Y.)

One summer afternoon I was walking along the Grand Trunk tracks at a station on its line called St. Davids, in the province of Ontario, Canada. There was a long freight train of empty and loaded cars pulling out of the yard, and I was counting them as I walked along on the down track.

I noticed a man standing on the back end of the van car, but did not pay any attention to him. When the van car reached me the man leaned out and said, "Look behind you."

I did so, and I saw the Montreal express train rushing around a sharp curve, about fifty yards away.

The telegraph operator, who saw the whole occurrence, told me that I made the quickest bound that he ever saw a boy make, and it must be true, for I cleared three tracks in two bounds and then dropped flat on the fourth. This is the closest call I ever had, and I certainly do not want another.

My Hunting Trip.

(By Jas. Ramsey, Jr., Indiana.)

One day last winter Leslie Cox, one of my old friends, came along and wanted me to go hunting with him.

Of course I readily consented to go—that is, if my parents would let me. I went and asked them and they said that I could go; so I took my gun and we lit out.

We hunted all day, and along toward night it began raining. We wandered around in the woods until after a while we came in sight of a schoolhouse, so we decided to stay in there all night. We went in and built a fire and I went out to get some coal. I had not been gone long when my pard came running out and said that there was an old tramp in there, and he said that he was going to stay all night, too.

We argued together for a long time; after a while we decided to stay, rather than go home, through the snow which was now falling—the rain having changed to snow.

After a while it became time to go to bed, so we dragged the recitation bench up to the fire and lay down on it, while the other fellow lay down on the floor. We had taken great pains not to leave our guns unloaded.

I stayed awake while Leslie slept; then he stayed awake while I slept. It was my time to watch when I heard footsteps out in the hall, and our tramp got up and went out there. I awoke Leslie and told him what I had seen and heard, but before I got him fairly awake the tramp came in, leading the way and followed by two stout, well-armed men. They ordered us to march.

Of course we obeyed. They led us to a cabin in the woods and down into a cellar, and left only one guard with us, and, fortunately for us, our guns. The other robbers had not more than got out of sight when I pulled the trigger on the guard and he fell dead. We started to go away when we heard the other two robbers coming.

We dodged behind the door and let them pass up about six feet and then pulled trigger. Both of the robbers fell dead. Then we left for home and told our story, and came to find out that we had killed the greatest robbers in the country.

A Lucky Fall.

(By Tom Hull, N. J.)

One day as I was playing with a ball it went on the roof of a house next door to the one in which I lived.

I asked the lady if I could go on the roof and get my ball, but she would not let me.

I got onto the roof of the house I lived in and was going to get onto the other roof by walking across a board.

I put the board across and was going over when I slipped and fell into the alley between the two houses.

I would have been killed on the stones if it had not been for a baby carriage that was standing there, and into which I fell without being hurt.

A Hairbreadth Escape.

(By O. H. Fisher, Ohio.)

I was riding along a lonely path in Hopkins County, Arizona, on a hot August day in '99, when the approach of night and a coming storm warned me to seek some kind of shelter for myself and horse.

Just as it started to rain I espied a light in the woods, about one hundred yards to the left. I rode up to the door and finally, after much persuading, gained admittance. The family consisted of a rather fierce-looking man and a woman of about the same caliber.

The hut was a rudely constructed affair, about 20x24. In one corner blankets and old pieces of carpet were hung up, behind which was the only bed.

After supper, showing much fatigue from my long ride, I was shown into the inclosure and told it was my sleeping place.

I closely examined the place and found it to contain about half a load of pumpkins beside and under the bed, and any amount of rats and mice.

As I said before, I did not like the looks of my host and hostess, so I concluded to keep on the watch.

Taking a wig from my grip I carefully placed it on a pumpkin and laid it on the pillow. I then crawled under the bed to get some rest, as I was very tired. About midnight I was suddenly aroused by a tremendous explosion, and pumpkin flying all around the "room."

I jumped up and ran out smack into the old man, who was just coming in. I gave him a blow with the butt of my pistol which knocked him out; by this time the woman had armed herself with a fierce-looking knife and made toward me, but as I was nearer the door I bolted and ran, not wishing to hurt the woman.

I secured my horse and left the place as fast as I could.

PRIZE WINNERS.

The judges who have been at work going over the entries in Anecdote Contest No. 4 have at last selected the seven boys who sent in the best stories. Here are their names:

L. Roberts, 2044 Royal street, New Orleans.

C. D. Southard, Turner, Mo.

Joseph Bond, 3631 N. Bouvier street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Willis Butler, 760 Foster street, Shreveport, La.

Thomas Kline, 6 Hingham street, Boston, Mass.

Edward J. Bredemann, 173 E. McCarty street, Jefferson City, Mo.

Harold Ogilvie, Ratan, New Mexico.

By this time each of these boys has received a Famous Fishing Tackle Assortment.

Three cheers and a tiger for each and all of them, and three cheers for the host of boys who came near winning.

They are the boys who should try again. It's the boy who tries, time after time, who finally wins out.

Look on page 32 for the list of prizes in our new contest.



\$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or silver. Also Moustache or Full Beard, Irish or Bide Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up. Im. Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large ill. cat's of plays, wigs, tricks & agns. latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate finger Ring FREE, send size. Address Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.



Numbers of

GOOD NEWS

BOUGHT

The following numbers of GOOD NEWS will be bought. Any boys having them in their possession should communicate at once with

P. O. Box 192, New York

If you have the following numbers, write at once:

Numbers 137, 349, 370 to 377, inclusive.

HERE'S A NEW CONTEST! A GORKER!

The Contest just starting is going to be the greatest we ever ran. It's an entirely new idea. The Prizes are new and the finest we ever offered. The other contests held in the **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY** have all made splendid success, but this one is sure to break all records. Why? Because it is a brand-new idea—a contest every boy in America has an equal chance in, and because the prizes beat anything ever offered before. All you have to do is to write out an account of any of your

Curious Dreams.

Everybody has had remarkable dreams, and anybody who sends in an account of one has a chance of winning one of the prizes. They consist of

THREE FIRST-CLASS PHOTOGRAPHIC OUTFITS,

Including Camera and all Appliances for Taking and Developing Photographs.

Five Hunting Axes and Five Hunting Knives.

Think of the fun you can have this winter with one of those cameras. You can take and develop photographs of all your friends. Full directions go with each camera. Think how useful and handy a first-rate hunting knife or ax will be when you go hunting or trapping in the woods this winter.

To Win a Prize.—Write an account of any curious or remarkable dream you have had—no matter what it was about. Tell it in five hundred words, and send it with the coupon you will find on this page, properly filled out, to the **BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City.

HERE IS A LIST OF THE PRIZES:

The three boys who send in the three most interesting accounts will each receive an **Eastman Pocket Kodak**, with complete outfit. The camera takes picture $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2$ inches; uses film, and has capacity for twelve pictures without reloading; weight six ounces. This wonderful little camera takes pictures equal to the most expensive. It makes negatives of such sharpness and definition that beautiful enlargements of any size can be made from them. Has perfect Achromatic Lens of fixed focus, Rotary Shutter, with sets of three stops, square View Finder, and covered with fine Seal Grain Leather. Takes snap shots or time exposures. Easily carried in pocket or on bicycle. Complete with roll of film for twelve exposures and Leather Carrying Case, with room for three extra film cartridges.

The five boys who send in the five next best accounts will each receive a **Safety Hunting Ax**. Dimensions over all 11×4 inches; weight 18 ounces. The blade is made of solid tool steel, finely tempered and highly polished. The handle is made of mild steel, nickel plated on copper, with handle plates of engraved hard rubber. The guard is of sheet steel, hinged on a spring in such a manner that either open or closed it is firmly held in position. The construction is unique

and of such a nature as to make it almost impossible for one part to become detached from another. The head has an oblong semi-circular recess milled in either side to receive the slotted end of handle, which is accurately milled to a close fit and firmly held by a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch steel screw. This method of handle fastening prevents any liability of the blade working loose on the handle. The upper part of the handle is slotted on the under side to receive the folded sheet steel guard, which is so arranged as to be firmly held by a flat steel bar when open or closed.

The five boys who send in the five next best accounts will each receive a **Sportsman's Ideal Hunting Knife**. There is about as much difference in point of utility and beauty between one of our "Ideal" hunting knives and any other knife on the market as there is between a grizzly bear and a porcupine. They are hand forged, hand tempered, hand tested by the rigidest possible test and finished in a manner that makes them the handsomest knives in the market. The "Ideal" knives are made with 5-inch blades, leather handle, brass and fibre trimmings, with polished stag-horn tip. A handsome black or russet case with each knife.

Now, Boys, You See Your Chance! It's Up to You to Win a Prize!

COUPON.

BUFFALO BILL DREAM CONTEST.

Name.....
Street and No.....
City or Town.....
State.....
Title of Story.....

This Contest closes **December 1st**. All entries must be in by that date.

Remember, the "**BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY**" has the greatest circulation of any weekly descriptive of Indian warfare ever published. Your story, whether it wins a prize or not, has a chance of being published, and will be read throughout the length and breadth of the Continent.



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